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A CHANGE
WITH THE SEASONS

OR

AN EPISODE OF CASTLE CRAGS

A NOVEL

BY

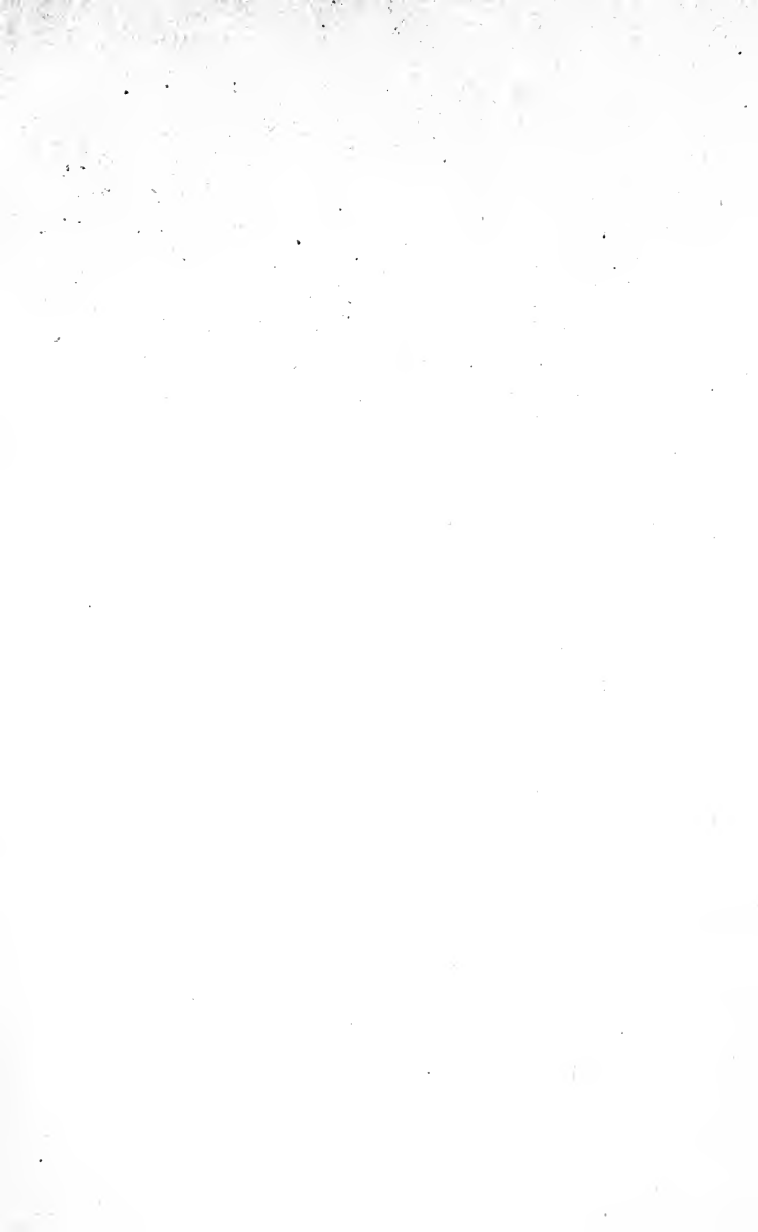
DUNCAN CUMMING



DUNSMUIR, CAL.

THE DUNSMUIR PUBLISHING CO.

1897



Cummings, George Duncan

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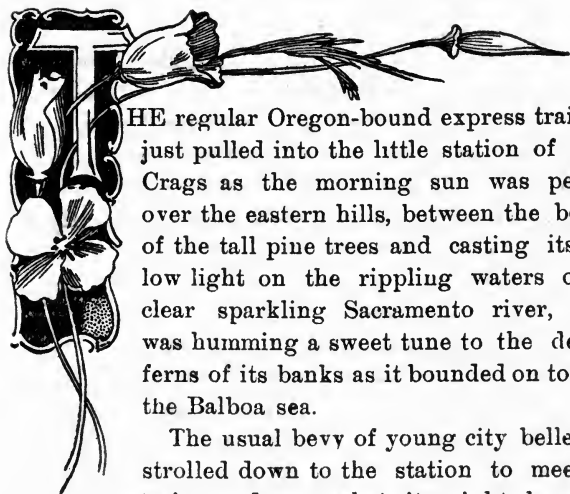
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A CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS

PART I.

CHAPTER I.



THE regular Oregon-bound express train had just pulled into the little station of Castle Crags as the morning sun was peeping over the eastern hills, between the boughs of the tall pine trees and casting its mellow light on the rippling waters of the clear sparkling Sacramento river, which was humming a sweet tune to the delicate ferns of its banks as it bounded on towards the Balboa sea.

The usual bevy of young city belles had strolled down to the station to meet the train, and see what it might have this morning to add to their contingent of youth and beauty. They were part of San Francisco's fashionable set who spend their summers in the

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mountains, or at the watering places by the seashore; and the Tavern of Castle Crag, where they are now stopping, is one of the most fashionable resorts in California. The notable attractions are the wooded glens, mountain crags, mineral springs and crystal streams. The gray granite peaks of Castle Crag and the distant view of Mount Shasta are always attractions to draw the tourist from afar, and the pretty girls who congregated there when this story opened would draw anything that wasn't fossilized.

The usual crowd of idlers, stragglers, railroaders, sawmillers, woodchoppers, etc., were also loitering around the little quaint station-house, to see what was going on; and, standing apart from the throng were two listless young men, of a strikingly high stamp of culture, gazing carelessly at the stir, bustle and life which the dusty train had created, and not apparently caring who arrived, departed or stayed.

A gentleman and lady were seen to descend the steps of one of the Pullman coaches, brush by the two loitering young men, glide through the bevy of pretty girls from the metropolis, idlers, etc., etc., and mount the tavern carriage—the damsels opened their pretty eyes in wonderment; the millmen brushed the sawdust from their hair; the railroaders gave their accustomed stare; and one of the listless young men (the youngest and least

"strikingly" of the pair) exclaimed "well!—Ben, did you ever see such a stunner as that?"

Ben stood for fully two minutes, lost in thought—apparently watching the sunbeams dance upon the jagged peaks of Castle Crag—till finally his thoughts found expression in the inquiry: "Such a stunner as what?"

"That apparition who just floated down from the train."

"Did I?—well—never—yes! I must have known her—those eyes! When have I looked in them before?—Am I dreaming? or is this the woman of my fancy?"

"She must have stunned you, sure enough," broke in his companion, dryly.

"Pardon me! She reminded me of some one I have known—of herself, perhaps—for I have never met anyone like her before," he murmured.

"Or no one else has."

"I believe that is my affinity. Do you know that I some times believe there is a hidden truth in the teachings of Buddhism, and that a person may meet with spirits whom they have known in some other existence? That idea was never so strongly impressed on me as at this very moment, and I believe that this woman must have been associated with me at some indefinite time in the mysterious past."

"Nonsense! I never heard you talk so before."



"I have never felt so before, and I have outlived the love affairs of youth—but that woman—one glimpse of her!" he continued, partly talking to himself. "I must have known her. It may have been in my dreams, or in some other world."

"What a ridiculous idea."

"It is not ridiculous at all, if it is so, and it has as much in its favor as any other view we have of the unknown."

"I have become smitten with this 'mysterious' attraction myself," remarked his companion, "but I never remember having any associations, or liaisons on any other sphere with her."

"Who said that I was smitten?" reiterated the speaker addressed as Ben; feeling piqued at the light remarks of his companion, over a sentiment which had so unexpectedly taken such a firm hold of him. For the brief glance of the lovely woman had awakened long, slumbering emotions, which really had never before resolved themselves into definite forms. Her eyes had just met his for a moment, but in that moment he was attracted as though with the love of the infinite. "This thing may sound foolish to you," he continued, but I have been similarly impressed several times before by the opposite sex when I met them for the first time, though not so forcibly—and they went their way and I went mine—and still they are the people who I would like to live with

through all time."

"That's moonshine, Ben, pure and simple."

"There is probably a something that we know not of in our lighter hours, and being as you are always light (lightweight) it was not supposed that you should understand a sentiment so deep and unfathomable, therefore I was partly addressing myself to the sympathetic peaks!" he muttered, hardly audible, as his gaze wandered back to the mountain.

"Perhaps you have known her before Ben," broke in the younger man after a short pause.

"I am pretty certain that we have never met before in this life; but then it seems that I have known her—she gave me a glance of recognition which is sometimes exchanged between kindred souls."

"Those are some of the fancies of your poetic imagination."

"This is no passing fancy, I assure you. I will never forget this meeting by chance—see what an attraction she is creating as she rides through the passing throng? How she lays her head back on her pretty neck?" he continued, in an admiring mood. "As though she longed to rest it on some one's breast. Look at the way that beautiful dark-brown hair clusters around her ears,—defying the breeze—clinging in an embrace which denotes love and refinement! I am always falling

in love with a pretty head of hair."

"I believe you are falling in love with everything in sight to-day. You seemed to be about as badly enamored with Miss Hortense this morning."

"That is strange. Well, the only women I have ever loved in my life were those I loved at first sight." He replied gravely, and he seemed to realize that those two loves of to-day would be with him for life. And, as the 'buss wound towards the tavern with its precious load of freight, he relapsed into silence, and turned his eyes again towards the gray rocks of the Crag.

"I wonder who her male escort can be?" remarked his young friend, badly smitten with the fair traveler too. "He must surely be her father," he mused. "Such a beautiful creature as that cannot possibly be married to a man over fifty and she not out of her teens, if I'm a judge. I have never met either in society in San Francisco, or at Burlingame or Del Monte. But whoever she is I will make a raid on her affections before she leaves the tavern, or we will know why. My friend here thinks he has a mash, but he is too romantic, aren't you?" twitting his companion in a mischievous manner.

"For one taste of her rosy lips
And a glance of her winsome eye."

Sang the other in reply.

"Her escort is a regular old Arachnoidea too, Don't you think so, Ben? It wouldn't surprise me a bit to see him weaving webs from tree to tree."

"Well, he had better not weave any webs around me."

"Or me either. But I am beginning to think he has a web woven around that young girl."

"Well, lets go and brush away the web."

"Yes, and we will tangle him in his own woof."

The last speaker, whose name is Cloyd Landers, is a scion of one of San Francisco's wealthy families, who is sojourning at this pleasant mountain resort for a few months to see what he can get out of country life, and, as his parents hope, where he will be removed from the temptations of gin and other forms of city vice. He is a good natured young man, and, like many of his class, puts wine and woman ahead of all earthly enjoyments.

His companion, Ben Bynington, is living in the mountains at present because he is not particularly living anywhere else.

He is a bohemian from bohemianville, and not one of the fashionable set, or part of the four hundred, although he is associating with them to some extent at the time this narrative opens. A large-sized, good-looking man, descended from a

hardy stock, with a pleasant face, a little marred by care and dissipation; but still youthful, and the eyes are bright with that tender luster so few possess.

He is considerably older than his companion and different in every way; but they have somehow taken a great liking for each other, and the young sapling has recognized the superiority of his associate, while they both have a natural weakness for the opposite sex. Not that they are particularly bad in this line, but neither of them could resist any love affair which presented itself in their environment, and Landers considers himself a real breaker of hearts.

Bynnington has very peculiar ideas on this subject also. He has not the reverence for chastity and spotless reputations that some matrons and good religious people have (a fault which I am very sorry to find in my hero, but I have no power to change his ideas).

In viewing a female from this particular standpoint, he just simply does not care for, nor respect her because she is living an immaculate life—he only pities her. He believes that women should have the same rights as men, and practices what he preaches.

Not that he is a great rake himself, but he believes in love, and thinks it is morally right to partake of its fruits while young, because, if when

one grows old he has missed the enjoyment in the only life he is sure of living, he has suffered an irreparable loss.

This man is not an ignoramus. He has held responsible positions on the editorial staff of some of the foremost daily papers in the United States, has played successful parts on the histrionic stage, and has written some very good poetry, and dabbled in literature generally.

Besides this he has been an extensive traveler; knows all about the world and its inhabitants; a lover of women and books; and a truly warm-hearted, interesting individual to those few whom he chooses as his friends.

His ideal character in history seems to be about one of Byron's creations:

"He loved the muses and the sex;
And sometimes these so froward are,
They made him wish himself at war,
But soon his wrath being o'er, he took
Another mistress, or new book."

Not that he is having any such a glorious time himself, but he considers that old king the happiest man on earth.

He is a person who appears to be frank and open, and while he finds out all about your business, without directly questioning you either, you have succeeded in learning very little about him.

or his affairs. In fact the people who associated with him for several months had not the slightest idea what his calling was, while he knew their history for several generations.

His age is anywhere between thirty and thirty-five, and although he has dipped into numerous dissipations he still looks young and has boyish ways.

A character rather out of the commonplace, indeed.

His reasons for being found dallying around a summer resort, "mashing" sundry dames, in place of following his vocation in the city along with other Bohemians, are well known to himself, if not to the people with whom he is associating. He has found that his constitution is so shattered that he can live more at ease out on the plains or in the mountains than anywhere else. Though he is aware of this himself it has not been revealed to others, and by his looks they would never suspect it. He has learned to preside over his own physique and is trying to discover how to control his own destiny.

When one comes to study his character closely he learns that it is a contradiction. He is a peculiar individual who may be considered soft and hard; and a number of Shylocks, who tried to impose upon his implicit credulity at different times, came out grievously disappointed. Though,

with all his genius and knowledge of the world, he is still poor. This may be partly accounted for, because he is always a victim to the adversity of chance, and partly because he would rather follow the object of his fancy than to glean where his financial interests lie. In fact he cares nothing about money so long as he has enough to pay expenses, and his talents can always be relied upon to produce enough for that.

I called him a genius. That he is endowed with this divine gift has been demonstrated quite unexpectedly at different times, though very often indolent, and some times considered real stupid. It was during the latter intervals that the sharks were so badly taken in when they thought they had a piece of live matter to be used to their advantage.

He is the same contradiction in his makeup; generally careless about his personal appearance and toilet, though sensitive and proud to a degree scarcely comprehensible to the everyday mortal with whom he comes in contact, and never rightly understood.

So he and his young "Pacificcoastbred" companion, whose character has developed nothing yet worthy a description (though it may develop a great deal if he does not soon learn to curtail his indulgence in wine and woman), sauntered

“Do your eyes behold that, Bynington?” murmured young Landers, as he tried to push the name through the heavy sheet of the register with his fingers. “Go and throw your unfortunate remnants in the Sacramento river and be done with earth forever.

"I know you are worse stricken with that lavish looking piece of female loveliness than I am," he continued. "And here, before we get a second glimpse of her angelic form and roguish eyes we find her registered as the wife of an ugly old man. Pshaw!" he cried, with apparent contemptuous disapprobation, withdrawing his hand from the book. "Go off and die!"

"You seem to be the only one disappointed in the matter," replied the other, calmly.

"Oh, I am not disappointed! There is a chance that I may be able to amuse the lady while the old man is absent, but you will be barred from basking in the sunshine of her beauty by all events. I foresee your doom!"

“Well, I am not discussing the subject. Like Byron, I have said nothing, and said it gracefully; but you seem to talk about strange persons rather

disgracefully," and (he continued in an undertone) "those ladies have overheard your remarks and are shocked."

"A conception wouldn't shock them," the young man replied, and whistled himself over to the clubhouse to order some liquid refreshments on ice.

The other made no signs of being further disturbed by his late affair of the heart and the unfavorable turn it had taken. He had given vent to his feelings when first seeing the female descend like a meteor from the train, but now he was as uncommunicative as the hotel's big safe, and stalked as brusquely by a coterie of pretty young damsels, who were flooding the office with their morning charms, as if they did not exist.

One of them remarked that Mr. Bynington must be stricken with paralysis, because nothing but the immediate approach of death would keep him from smiling on a fair female face.



CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Aregave appeared that evening among the other fashionable guests on the veranda of the tavern and she was truly as lovely a creature as the sun, or the electric lights, ever shone upon.

She was tall and graceful, but not too tall. The rise and fall of her partly-developed bosom was just discernible. Not obtrusive, as it generally becomes in a matron; but an early healthy flush of young innocence, apparent to the senses as well as to the sight. Her eyes were of that bewildering color which seem to change under different emotions—blue—but they are sometimes gray—but when they throw that soft-seductive glance on some one they love, with all the soul of feeling behind it, it is a boon which anyone would almost sacrifice his hopes of the hereafter to enjoy.

Her lips were that red, rosy kissable affair, like the petals just opening on a rosebud, and looked as though the fortunate individual whoever got a chance to kiss them would never leave off as long as he was conscious of mundane existence. I said her lips were like a rosebud; but, rather, they resembled the newly opened bud of one of

the smaller varieties of the cacti, which grows near the ground, and is all white and red—red and white—and seems to be opening to be kissed. It is the flower of her native heath, as they were both nourished to life on the same soil, and breathed of the same warm air.

Her whole form and being was one of kindness, lavableness and trust. She was not half so ambitious for wealth and power as she was delighted to have some one to love her. And all she would really ask of a man would be to give her enough to eat, and his entire affections; though rumor has already spread that she was a poor, unknown orphan, who had married the rich old Joseph Aregave for his wealth, he being worth several millions in gold coin, mortgages, lands and mines.

Nina Aregave, as her full name proved to be, was one of the most natural little offsprings of the human race probably ever seen in a civilized country. Her appearance at Castle Crag was an event never to be forgotten by the sojourners there, and the impression she made on man, woman and child will be remembered for life. There were many young maidens quartered at the Castle Crag resort at the time, and I can say without flattery, or a chance of being disputed, that California produces as many beautiful, voluptuous women as any place on the face of the globe; but

the beauty of Mrs. Aregave was exceptional to any country, and it really found its birthplace down on the desert, where the thorny giant cactus (night-blooming cereus) looks over a dried-up waste of sand. As some of the rarest, loveliest flowers in the world bloom upon the bosom of that produce-forsaken strand, so she, the most precious flower of all, was reared away out on that solemn trackless lonely waste, that one learns to love if he lives there for any certain length of time.

Omnia praeclara rara.

Her growth to womanhood on the free-unhampered level plains and low-rolling hills, and her out-door life in the warm sunshine, had developed something quite different from the house-hold, matron-bred girl of the period. Her frank, trustful, affectionate nature and awkward girlish ways, linked with her wonderful beauty, were really something puzzling, and they drove her male admirers to distraction—and they were every man she met.

There was something about her that made a man wish to rest his head upon her breast and be at peace with all the world—and the universe. She had been reared in a land of unextinguished fire, and had absorbed part of it in her nature, and every man she met was attracted by its flame.

The young San Francisco belles having such a

rival as this were entirely blotted out of men's thoughts.

She had been taught the rudiments of an education at home and was then sent to advanced schools, the last being a Normal School in Southern California. Outside of this book learning she was entirely ignorant of the world. She had a chaperon in the person of an old Mexican woman, who had always lived in the family. Of course the old crone knew enough to keep men away from a young girl while she was single, but after marriage—she could go as she pleased—that is the Mexican style.

Such is this young daughter of earth, who we met up near the base of Mount Shasta, and who caused the production of this tale.

As lovable a creature as she is, though, it is doubtful whether there is much affection in the Aregave family or not; there seems to be something lacking; and then they are not well suited or adapted to each other; and that passionate nature of hers cannot long survive without some strong attachment to cling to.

She knows not what is before her though, poor girl, that affection of hers will be stretched to its utmost tension before another summer rolls around, and strong were she indeed if she could resist the pressure of a man warmer in passion, stronger in love than herself.

CHAPTER III.

The next morning she was out bright and early, like the bee, trying to sip the honey from the flowers before it was kissed away by the sun.

I said bright and early, but the sun does not get a sweep at that part of the canyon until about 8 or 9 o'clock A. M., so I suppose she was out at least by 8. The other guests would probably all be up by 10, if they had not been up too late the night before and were in a good sober condition.

The scenery around the tavern was so pretty that she took a run up on the hillside among the trees, where a thick grove of evergreens looked friendly and enticing. Here was the freedom of the plains and the forest that she loved so well. Every budding leaf spoke of the fellowship of nature—the act of developing into a sexual being, capable of loving and enjoying the senses of life—and the air was so buoyant and light that she went almost wild with delight, and ran happily through the grove, singing and talking to the natural wild elements of the forest.

"O, ye dear old trees!" she cried, "I can hug and kiss you with a truly platonic affection. You stand so quietly, disdaining our run-around, struggling, fighting lives! You seem so sheltering to one who is growing heart-sick. Oh, how you remind me of the happy days of my youth!—the scenes around my childhood desert home—give me your shelter and sympathy, Oh monarch of the forest! ye breathe the same air that I do.

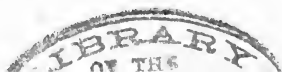
"I can hug you and love you," she cried with the fullness of her heart, as she wrapped her arms around a young pine, "and you, you old sentinel of the mountains, I must hug you too, and you!" she went on hugging the forest, regardless of getting her arms plastered with balsam.

"And hug me too!" gasped a form a few feet in front of her.

And looking up she was startled to see that she had come within a foot of hugging a strange man.

Neither of them could do more than stare at each other, as they did not have presence of mind enough to laugh at the ridiculous part of the situation. It seemed so absurd, especially on her part, to be going around the woods hugging things inanimate and animate.

But neither smiled—they just gazed in each other's eyes, till the strange creatures imagined that they had always known each other, and were a part of the first two kindred souls created, and



were still out in the primeval woods, on a sphere inhabited by no one but themselves. Children of the same kin, made up of atoms that had been linked together in a bond of love in the distant past; and their sympathetic glance filled with the love-light of the wounded doe gazing upon her helpless fawn, as they stood there—partly unconscious of life—just their inner beings holding a telegraphic conversation with each other. It was one of the queer, unexplainable things of nature, that two people should recognize each other as old friends the first time they met, and imagine there is a love between them that had existed before the birth of this life—had commenced at Times dawn.

There may be a possibility that people meet part of the atoms they had associated with in some other life: that is, providing we admit the hypothesis that they lived the other life, which is not at all certain, and we believe not admitted by the Christian world.

She finally dropped her eyes and walked back to the hotel, her mind all in a flutter. She felt ashamed because this man had heard her pouring out her soul to the elements; puzzled whether she had really known him before or not; why he seemed to be a part of her very self; and who he could be anyway. All those thoughts seemed to

be crisscrossing themselves in her brain as she returned to the hotel and sit down alone in the corner of the dining room to eat her breakfast; her spouse having already partaken of his.

"Had that man come out on the plains when I was a girl," she mused, "before I went away to prosaic school, and become old and worn; and we had loved and lived together; driving cattle over the plains, and watching the lazy lizard basking in the sunshine on the mulberry tree by the cool spring, and the quail calling to his mate from under the screw-pod mezquite; without any idea of the outer world, city life, society, or the struggles of humanity, how happy I could have been! Such fate was not intended for me, and love and happiness will never be mine!" And she sighed so deeply that the pretty little English girl who waited on the table came over to her side to extend her sympathy, if the beautiful young lady of wealth would have it.

But no, she was thinking of the tender look given her that morning by a strange man in the woods.

Alas! they had been too earnest at that first meeting for their own peace of mind, when they met again and became better acquainted they would only steal sly glances at each other—which might have attracted the attention of a close observer, but the people on their summer outing

were not observing so closely—and that very seldom when in the presence of others.

Many times that day she wondered who the man was who had aroused her curiosity to such an extent, and would give anything to know whether he stopped at the hotel or was just some wild man of the woods. She took pains to notice all the male guests there, but had not as yet seen him, so she made up her mind that the passing fascination was a very foolish one and she would think no more about it.

So she seated herself by the window in the spacious office, which looked so much like the interior of an old English tavern in the time of Queen Anne, and so very homelike; and looked out at the window on the pretty landscape, the winding river and the gray old peaks of Castle Craggs that stood away up against the blue sky on the other side of the river, forming a background to the panorama spread before her. She sat and dreamed of her childhood and the wonderful changes that had already taken place in her brief young life. Not yet within a year or two of twenty, and persuaded into marrying a rich old man whom she cared very little about. She might be happy and contented with everything which wealth could bestow, but it did not suit her fancy and poetic imagination to be so, she wanted to have romantic love affairs. And, as we hinted be-

fore, there was something lacking in this marriage which she hardly understood herself.

The strange man came into her vision again, and as she cast her eyes over the lawn she saw him coming up the gravel walk, his face lit up with an expression she called the light of genius.

She stepped over to the counter and asked the clerk who the gentleman was.

"That is Ben Bynington, madam," responded that agreeable functionary. "He is a very entertaining gentleman, and besides putting in his time, he has helped to make considerable amusement here of late, in the way of private theatricals and other functions. Let me introduce him?" quizzed the clerk, always ready to make acquaintances among the guests, or to work up affairs which might eventually lead into something more serious

"Mr. Bynington, this is Mrs. Aregave, one of our latest arrivals!" said the functionary as Bynington entered.

"Mr. Bynington is acting a part in Julius Cæsar here now, just for amusement, you know. Do you ever take a part in private theatricals, Mrs. Aregave?"

"Oh, dear, no! I could not go before the public on the stage," answered the lady. "Though I have sang a little in that line in a small way. Used to take quite an interest in it at Normal

School. I like theatres and theatrical people, what I have seen of them."

"Well, that is just what we need, isn't it, Mr. Bynington?" asked the clerk. "A singer for the intervals between your tragedy and Mr. Landers' wit." And just then Mr. Landers came down the hall.

"Mr. Landers, Mrs. Aregave," and Mr. Landers bowed to the lady in his most graceful manner.

The new acquaintances fell to discussing the drama, and made arrangements to give a play—or selections from plays—for the amusement of the wives and daughters of San Francisco's four hundred.



CHAPTER IV.

Joseph Aregave was a wealthy old man with very little wit, and would pass for a gentleman all right among people who worship gold as their king. He had been a rough enough looking character in his younger days, but his associations and the advantages that money and good clothes gave him as he grew older made him appear quite aristocratic.

His face was beginning to show the ravages of time, and the physical essence which gave vigor to the system was fast drying up.

He was by profession a money-loaner and millionaire, and was as grasping an old creature as one could meet with anywhere. The usurer was a little peculiar himself. He had come to the Coast in early days, then a young boy from off his father's farm, and struggled against ill luck for many years; but finally he got to accumulating money and developed the habit of hoarding it. He saw how money could be made by loaning it

at big interest, with a dead-mortal-cinch security, so he soon developed into a usurer of the most pronounced type. Every idea had left his head but per-cent, per-cent!

He lived to the age of fifty odd years without taking to himself a wife. He may have had pretty good reasons for this. The majority of women he met on the Pacific Coast in his younger days were not worth marrying, and those who were worth marrying would not have him. So he lived on from year to year and hoarded up wealth—just piled it up. The older he grew the meaner he got, and he ran along with his head in the ground looking for per-cent, per-cent!

He had lots of poor relatives in the East, but he could afford to give nothing to them. How could he give money to poor relatives when he could get twelve and twenty-four per cent interest, and sometimes thirty-six per cent?

He said "I never make it a point to loan money unless I can get double the amount in security. Collateral is good enough if there is enough of it, but the rate of interest must be high on every thing but real estate, and that they can have money on at twelve-per-cent, twelve-per-cent!" and the old shark would twist up his thumbs and look wise.

He was really as surly as an Apache; as calculatingly sober as a civil engineer; as big a fraud

as a politician; and as witless as a bank cashier.

And it so happened that in his wanderings around he met this wonderfully pretty school girl at a Normal School in Southern California, and seeing that she was a perfect child of Nature full of the first burst of womanly love and life, and entirely ignorant of the world, he laid plans to capture her—make her his wife so he would have some one to take care of him in his old age—and succeeded.

She was an orphan and was being educated by the trustees of her father's estate, which consisted of a ranch and a band of cattle on the desert. Her father and mother had been killed by Indians when she was a little girl of ten or twelve years, and she escaped with the old Señora, who has been her only companion since.

So it was quite in the probabilities that he should succeed in a small affair like that. A man with several million dollars ought to be able to win a school girl of slender means, if he went about it right; and the Trustees were not backward in assisting a transaction of that kind, if there was a consideration in it for them; and her old Mexican counselloress, or confessoress, was delighted to see her married and off her hands, so she could sit down and roll her cigarettes in perfect comfort.

And thus it happened that old usurer Aregave

came to be visiting the summer resorts with a sweet young wife.

After putting in a lifetime loaning money and getting the dead mortal cinch on people who were not in a position to protect themselves he imagined that he was one of the brightest individuals on the face of the earth.

After they had become acquainted at the hotel, settled down on a social footing and the wife had made a few friends, the old man was going to be certain that she did not go off on a tangent, overstep the bounds of propriety or have any flirtations on the side. He considered himself particularly clever in molding the future conduct of his wife.

There was a mystery about this marriage anyway, which probably gave him some anxiety, and which accounts to some extent for his wife's conduct. This mystery she could not, or dared not explain, made life a curse. It may be revealed to the reader later on.

There was very little of a social nature transpiring at this resort that was of much particular interest. In fact the wives and daughters of the well-to-do just fill up such places in the summer time in order to be going somewhere, and to find a change of climate. Though there were several ladies and gentlemen who were quite talented, and helped amuse the others by delivering ora-

tions, reciting extracts from plays, and rendering vocal and instrumental music in a really entertaining manner. By far the best of those was Ben Bynington. He was a poet and a natural gifted actor, and could render some parts of Shakespeare admirably. He would deliver short pieces from Julius Cæsar better than any actor I ever heard, with the possible exception of Edwin Booth. He was good at tragedy and touching scenes; his nature being one of pathos and emotions. I have heard him exclaim after Brutus:

Lucius, a bowl of wine!
 O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs!
 No man bears sorrow better—Portia is dead.

when it would send a thrill through the frame of every person in the audience, though the words were uttered so low that they were scarcely audible. The heart, and soul, and precious fire were in the man, though they very often slept, and the ignorant and unthinking were measuring him up as a dunce. I wonder if that is not a general custom of the ignorant towards finer clay than themselves, anyway?

CHAPTER V.

Since Mrs. Aregave's appearance among the sojourners at the Crag she has been admitted into the inner circle of the very elite. She is so amiable and agreeable, and has the most tender, emotional voice imaginable, which is greatly admired by all who have had the pleasure of hearing her sing. So when they gave any social functions or musicals she was prevailed upon to take a part, and was generally too accommodating to refuse.

Another delightful songbird rusticating there at the time this narrative opens was Miss Lillian Hortense (whom we have referred to before in this work) a very charming young girl with a sweet, heavenly voice; and a carriage as noble as the Venus de Medici, though the lines were a shade more delicately drawn and the contour more refined.

With such talent as Mme. Aregave, Miss Hortense, Mr. Bynington and Mr. Landers they arranged to give a series of dramatical entertain-

ments which would surpass anything ever heard of in that bend-in-the-canyon, and the likes of which has never been heard there since, or probably never will be again. The pathos of their utterances awakened emotion in the hearts of the most frivolous, and aroused the thoughtless to an understanding of the depth of the universe.

One night they put upon the boards a little performance (I forget now just what it was called) Mr. Bynington and Mrs. Aregave played the leading rolls; the latter personating one of those charming widows, whom any old bachelor would go wild over, or one who would "set ten (or a hundred) poets raving." This started in to be a very tragic love affair, but it changed around and came out so pleasantly in the end, and they loved each other so tenderly and naturally that the young ladies in the audience could hardly control themselves with delight, and in their inner hearts wished the affair was theirs.

Then Miss Lillian Hortense sang—O, so sweet and tender! The words fell from her lips like the trembling—rippling waters of the mountain streams dancing over the russet pebbles; or the music made by the delicate wild flowers when their soft petals were being played upon by the light breezes from old Shasta. It was charming and found its way into the inner recesses of the heart, and made the listener acknowledge that he

had not lived in vain.

When silence was restored after the long applause of this scene, Mr. Landers personated an Irish character, who had a little too much "booze" aboard, and won renown.

Then Mr. Bynington came out and gave one of his masterpieces from the immortal lines of the dramatist and carried the audience away off into the heroic fields of ancient history, even to where he exclaimed:

"Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to
heaven!"

He could not avoid an encore, and left the stage a second time while being pelted with flowers by the young ladies, after winding up with

* * * "Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia—nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered!"

The night's entertainment was not allowed to end without hearing some music from the lips of the lovely Mrs. Aregave. She reappeared and sang a little commonplace song that breathed the air of the plains. It was an account of a lonely rider dashing for his life from a band of Apache Indians. In the song one could really hear him beat the trembling plains beneath his charger's

feet. One could feel the wind as it slid from the rider on his race for life, and could hear the shouts of the redskins fading away on the plains behind. All the feeling and love in her warm, tender nature flowed from her beautiful red lips and man felt like worshipping as at a shrine.

After the music of her voice died away down the recesses of the long halls and melted out into unending space, to revibrate perhaps on some other shore, in some other heart, the long applause started in and shook the very vacuum in the electric lights.

I have forgotten the words of the song, but this was about the meaning it conveyed:

JOSE'S GALLANT RIDE.

A frontier gallant, young Jose,
 Renown'd throughout the land,
 Rode forth upon the plains one day
 To claim his lady's hand.

To meet the object of his heart,
 This son of Mexico,
 Must cross a wilderness apart,
 Where thorny cacti grow.

A desert broad, and loan, and bare,
 Where bad Apaches roam,
 And scurry for the scalp and hair
 Of those who stray from home.

He had not half his journey paced

When checking up his rein:
One lingering, longing look retraced,
Ere spurring on again.

Then bent his eyes in fondness where
The firmament and plain
Met in the distant hazy air
Above his love's domain.

Another nervous glance he took
Towards a shrubby shade,
Where living shadows seem'd to look
From out the silent glade.

And while he gazed, a tawny form
Burst from the shelter there,
And, rising like a coming storm,
Waved high his hand in air.

Behind him came a swarthy band
Of Athapascan men,
Who veil'd the air in clouds of sand
As they swept down the glen.

With shout, and yell, and powder flash!
The savage tribe came on—
One shot returned—Then with a dash
His steed had turn'd and gone.

Across the desert waste they bound;
The hunted in the lead;
While hard behind they aim to wound
His trusty, fleeting steed.

But to his horse he gave the rein,
And proudly on his back,
Glides swiftly o'er the trembling plain
For miles before the pack.

They speed across the mesa land;
O'er ridge, ravine and park,
Where buzzards soar above the strand
And lean coyotes bark.

The young Castilian keeps the lead,
Though bullets thick and fast
Fly closely round—his noble steed
Is sinking down at last.

“Now, for your life!” he urges on—
Her home is hard before—
The friendly goal is almost won,
And lover at the door!

Alas, the wounded horse sinks down!
When near the esplanade;
And (wild to gain his tribe's renown)
The foremost renegade.

Sweeps madly on the young Jose
To deal one deadly thrust—
A volley bursts across the way—
The redskin sinks to dust!

His tribe departs the storm of lead
Belch'd from the Rancho wall,
And young Jose is safely led
Within the Casa hall.

The fair young maid had seen afar
The deadly onward strife,
And rous'd the Rancho's force of war
To save her lover's life.

Mr. Aregave would help to make up the audience at some of those entertainments and had a

fair appreciation of his wife's talents. Though he would not join in the applause he could sometimes be heard to remark "That is capital! capital! It is equal to twelve per-cent, twelve pe-cent!" While he would twist his thumbs in right good humor.

Mrs. Aregave and young Landers had become very fast friends. He is quite amusing and popular as an all around ridiculous character. So the lady sometimes sours the feelings of her husband by being on too friendly terms with him. Of course she does nothing but talk and make fun with the youth; but that does not always please her lord. With Ben Bynington she is quite different. She always keeps a respectable distance from him (when off the stage) and the two enter into no familiarities. They never joke with each other, though they are both well supplied with wit and good humor.

Mr. Aregave is not at all pleased with his wife for taking so kindly to thy young harum-scarum from the Bay; and whenever any of the young people take a ride over any of the mountain trails, and she accompanies the party, without him, he endeavors to have Bynington act as her escort. So in that way the two are thrown much together; and they act more naturally than when in the society of others. In fact they are the two most devoted people when out alone that were

ever seen together, excepting of course lovers, and that would be out of the question. She would not entertain a thought about being untrue to her lord for the world. She would rather die first!

But still, they could have little innocent flirtations. The touch of the end of her fingers as he handed her a cup of soda water from the spring; the clasp of her hand while assisting her to alight from her steed; the tender glance exchanged as he presents a wild flower, plucked for her benefit from the steep precipice; and the thousand and one little sighs and glances between two people who think that there is a kindred connection between them somewhere in the universe—these often send a thrill through his frame and makes him want to clasp her in his arms and shower kiss—and kiss!—on these enticing lips!

But he never made any such familiar move as that, which would be shocking, and surely would have offended her feelings; but, still, it is hard to tell whether she would have had the power to resist.

Mr. Landers is dead in love with her too, when he is not flirting with some of the other women, and he imagines that the only thing that keeps his love affair from being a successful one is her jealous old husband, who should have been dead long ago. An old man has no business with a pretty wife anyway—she should be his daughter.

And so I would like to make her in this story if I was writing fiction, and it grieves me sore to think I cannot change it; but as I am jotting down the lives of real people I must adhere strictly to the truth, whatever comes of it. Like Plutarch, I am writing *Lives*. There are pretty young ladies enough at this summer resort, heaven knows; some of them rich and beautiful too, and I might marry two of those charming creatures to these young men, for certainly they ought to be married (a person is a fool who lives in single blessedness); but I cannot marry them as they did not take it in their heads to do that for themselves.



CHAPTER VI.

Some of the sojourners at the tavern that summer were the most interesting people whoever came together at a summer resort on the Pacific Coast, as the reader should imagine by this time.

Of course there was a goodly number of the budding debutantes, who considered that the world was made for them alone, and there was the self-important young swell with his cigarette-face and pants turned up at the heels. But the majority of them were very good people and some of the young ladies were the fairest on the continent.

There were the two Misses Ashland, daughters of one of San Francisco's richest families, and the ever charming Miss Hortense, all as wealthy and fair as the sun ever shone upon. And Lans Hallmore, a young man of considerable promise. They, and our three friends, Bynington, Landers and Mrs. Aregave, had many a delightful drive, ride and stroll over the country together that summer. They would ride or prowl at will over the

dusty roads or in the deep forests; and for reckless, slovenly traveling they could discount, at times, the woodsman, who inhabits the region at the present day, or the squawman of the vanishing past.

I have seen them driving over the mountains, the feminine contingent reckless of the display of their pretty limbs and bewitching charms, and the gallants so attentive to assist them to and from their steeds. And then to sit down in the shade of a big tree, tell stories, discuss the latest novel and gossip on the affairs of the day. Or seated by the river, watching the gentle current ripple, ripple over the pebbles, while they gazed contentedly upon the water and dreamed of other scenes and climes.

They would go in bathing altogether, in a deep pool in the cold water of the Sacramento river. Some of the young ladies in bathing suits which hardly contained material enough to make a flying-jib for a wheelbarrow, or a hood for the great American eagle, but their male companions would admire their angelic forms without a blush; while Castle Crags and Mount Shasta would look down benignly and nod their approval.

O, these were delightful days!—but how brief.

How brief is happiness, anyway! Are there any of us who have pleasure for any length of time?

Mrs. Aregave never engaged in any of those

swimming tournaments. She would rather sit and dream by the river banks. Or go with Bynington for a walk over the gravel trail to the soda spring.

How exquisitely nice it was sitting down in the cool shade by the babbling spring, watching the natural soda water gurgling up from the internal regions of the earth, and discussing the various characters in current fiction with her. She had a deep insight into human nature, and could take a character from a novel and give a wonderfully accurate description of its strength and weakness—as to what the author's intentions were in producing the character, and how far he had succeeded in carrying out his designs. She was a very vivacious interesting talker when she was warmed up to her subject, took an interest in it and was not dreaming. Then she made a picture so attractive that I do not believe there is a man living who could escape falling in love with her. As she sit on the ground with her form a little too much revealed, her dress creeping up above her shapely ankles—not vulgar—or not doing it purposely to show them, like some vicious married women whom I have known (highly respectable ladies too) though they will make some singular breaks towards certain of their bachelor friends. But this child of Nature was just a simple, awkward, schoolgirl in that line, and never tried to

attract a man in her life—they come to her without any efforts on her part. She was never vulgar. What would have been considered vulgarity in others, in her was sublime.

That beautiful brown hair could not be kept up either, or made to conform to the rules of fashion; but must wander off on the breath of every little zephyr that chose to play with its locks, and the more it wandered and tossed around the prettier she looked.

It was at some of these exclusive outings where Bynington and she became very fast friends. Indeed they were growing too friendly altogether for people under their condition and circumstances. She lying on the grass picking the delicate little cats-ears, pink sweet-williams, blue lilacs and other sweet-scented flowers of the wild-woods, and he seated at her feet biting pine-needles, gazing in her eyes and talking on themes which generally lead to love was not exactly a proper avocation for the bride of another man. But then if the husband had no objection I don't see as we have any right to interfere. Mr. Aregave was jealous enough, but he thought he was keeping her away from Mr. Landers and consequently it was all right.

I said she understood books. That in itself is something uncommon, especially in a girl of her years and experience, but whether it is a virtue

or a vice I am not prepared to say.

On one particular occasion they were so seated near the soda spring discussing the merits of the latest literary fad (I forget just what book it was) and they finally drifted into deeper literature.

"What do you think of Hamlet?" said she.

Any fool might ask this question, but Nina was seeking knowledge, and knew she was addressing a man capable of imparting it.

"Hamlet is a deep work, worthy more study than any other literary production in the language," he replied. "Some of the deepest parts of the plot are really not told in the play."

"It seems unnecessary for Hamlet to start for England and then return without accomplishing any purpose," she continued, leading him out.

"Carlyle says about the same thing. And I am surprised that as deep a philosopher as Carlyle could not see that the whole plot of the play hinged on that trip to England. And right there is where the play is so natural—unexpected events arose which overturned the plans of both Hamlet and his villainous uncle."

"Yes, that is natural. There is always things happening in real life to overthrow our plans!" and she sighed deeply.

"Man is always being swayed by the force of the Fates," he continued, "and it is a strong man indeed who has will power enough to make his



own fate."

"I wish I could make mine," she broke in.

"Let me be your fate," he answered, very much in earnest.

"No! Go on with the fate of Hamlet."

"When Hamlet started for England he knew his uncle, the king, was guilty of murder, but he had no proof against him save the words of a ghost, and you know a ghost is a poor witness to bring into any court to prove a case, even that of Denmark. And this ghost, anyway, would not show up in the sunshine, so it would be utterly impossible to take his deposition. Especially would he disappear at the thoughts of going before a notary. Now Hamlet embarked for England like an honest young man, with the avowed intention of paying his respects to the king of that country, and was accompanied by two rogues. Those two rogues were hirelings of the king, sent along to do him up. Hamlet being of a suspicious turn of mind, as anyone should be who had been holding nightly seances with immaterial spirits, arose in the night while his companions slept and went through their pockets. This thing is only told by Hamlet to Horatio afterwards in a hall in the castle, and I will give his exact words:

"Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them: had my desire;

Finger'd their pockets; and, in fine, withdrew
 To mine own room again: making so bold,
 My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
 Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,
 A royal knavery; an exact command,—
 Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
 Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
 With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,—
 That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
 No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
 My head should be struck off.'

"Now, there is royal knavery, indeed. Hamlet left the ship at the first opportunity and skipped back to Denmark with the royal commission in his pocket, signed with the king's own hand."

"And the two knaves went on to England."

"Yes, after Hamlet—I sat me down; devised a new commission; wrote it fair'—That the bearers be put to sudden death. 'Not shriving-time allowed.'"

"So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz went to 't?'"

"'They are not near my conscience; their defeat Does by their own insinuation grow:
 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
 Between the pass and fell incensed points
 Of mighty opposites!'"

"Hamlet and the king were two strong characters, weren't they, Mr. Bynington?"

"It would have been dangerous for a pretty young woman like you to fool with either of those old Dutchmen, I tell you. They were not innocent old book-worms like I."

"Then Hamlet returned."

"Yes, Nina—I mean Mrs.—ahem!—Now he had evidence enough to have the king's head cut off, or to arouse a mob of Danes to hang him to a tree. He also intended, very likely, when he came back to marry the fair Ophelia, kill off the old king and the two of them would reign happily over the Danes ever afterwards."

"Wouldn't that be nice!"

"It would be—sweet—But, alas, for well laid plans. The first thing he ran across was two clowns in the graveyard, digging a grave for Ophelia; the next he was invited to a duel, and his plans, as well as those of the monarch, ended in their deaths."

"I see, their plans miscarried."

"Yes. They all had a mis—I mean they missed their chances of further existence right there!

"Envenomed rapiers, poisoned drinks and Hamlet's valor floored all of them."

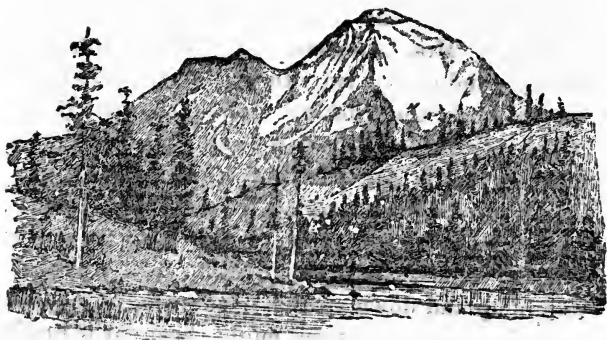
"Hamlet didn't seem to have much love for Ophelia," she said after a pause, looking on him

with those enchanting eyes.

"He never met you," he answered, trying to get hold of her hand, which had now turned to pluck some flowers.

"Don't!—it isn't right—there's some one coming."

He went to the spring to get her a drink of water, as footsteps sounded on the walk.



CHAPTER VII.

One fine morning a merry party of the lazy guests might have been seen sauntering across the lawn bound on a fishing expedition down the Sacramento. They tripped along in that leisurely careless gait that marks the pace of the well bred and well fed.

There were the two Misses Ashland, Miss Hortense, Mrs. Aregave, Mr. Bynington, Mr. Landers and one or two others. They made their way towards the rushing waters as eagerly as King Charles of Sweden and his scattered warriors made for the Borysthenes, such was their welcome for a river.

They threw their fancy poles over the blue surface and commenced to whip the troubled waters up and down stream, over rock, bush and bramble. Some of them might keep at it until doom's day and never get a bite. It is certain that the Fish Commissioners need have no apprehension for the extinction of the trout species

because of the angling skill of our friends.

The party after dallying a while with the stream wandered around and soon became scattered along the shady bank.

Mrs. Aregave and Bynington found themselves sauntering leisurely, down stream, among the green ferns, broad lilies and umbrella plants. They had lost sight of their companions and were rather lost to their surroundings. The river was skirted on their side by some beautiful old pine trees that made a perfect shade, and a thick growth of underbrush had grown up between eight and ten feet high which made the place a perfect thicket in which to get lost. It was one of the prettiest little paradises in the world into which man and woman ever wandered. The ground was covered with green foliage as soft as Brussels carpet, strewn with a luxurious growth of wild flowers of every hue. The moist plants of the river hung their heads up over the bank in great profusion to court the flowers of the upland. The day outside was quite hot and sultry, but within this eden bower it was cool and invigorating, and the air was scented with the sweet perfume of the flowers.

They stood between two pine trees which were woven together overhead by a network of vines, the ground at their feet looked like a huge lounge constructed in the forest for some tired travelers

to recline upon. They both, touched with similar instinct, sat down, and they sank nearly a foot in the wild grass and flowers. It was pretty to lay one's head on the ground and watch the blossoms waving over his face. He could imagine them to be big trees swaying over a plain, or change the spears of grass into a regiment of soldiers, or most anything his fancy pleased.

They commenced to talk of the country and the fish in the river, and the birds in the trees, but they could not follow the thread of the story, because they were in someway enticed to look at each other.

Who could help looking at the mortal (and immortal) form of Mrs. Aregave, leaning back in a nest of wild flowers, her pretty head pillowed upon the mossy roots of a vine-clad tree, her form stretched out as usual and partly visible beneath her light clothing. The rise and fall of her breast was the only movement discernible, otherwise it might be the production of some designer in marble.

From where they lay they had a fine glimpse of the placid river, and their gaze were attracted to it, as it stretched away in a peaceful, unruffled sheet, with the green foliage dripping in its edges and shutting out all other views. The stream made a turn above, so there was nothing to be

seen but the green leaves and the silver-colored surface of the water.

"What is there in a smooth, glassy sheet of water where the banks are hidden by green leaves, and a stillness resting on the surface, which attracts the senses, or the understanding, as it were, as nothing else does?" Said Mr. Bynington, putting the question to his companion. "I used to think, when a boy, that it was just a fancy of mine, but after seeing so many painters put the same on canvas—with the same thoughts—I have come to the conclusion that it impresses everybody alike."

"I know it always catches my fancy," she replied. "I love to sit by it and dream."

"There is something about that look—that first glimpse of the quiet, calm surface—which impresses one with a love of nature peculiar to itself."

"And one invariably expects to see in the picture two lovers drifting in a boat, with garments of gossamer and covered with wreathes of flowers."

"Or sitting on the banks, with the water laving their feet," he said.

"See it now?" she said, pointing a delicate finger. "Isn't it tranquil? Isn't it soul-filling? If we could only sail upon its surface?"

He looked on the water and he looked in her

soulful eyes. She seemed to contain the whole heavenly image of the scene in her person.

"If we could only go sailing together for ever and ever?" he said, and reached his arm around her waist. They were seated on a bed of flowers, and she did not try to move away.

He took her hand in the one he had disengaged and held it palm to palm, with their fingers interlocked, they sit there gazing in each other's eyes. They had no tongue to talk, or no inclination to use it anyway. Her pretty red lips were changing color with the natural fire of excitement—those lips were entirely irresistible—he was losing his head and heart—they were both fast losing their heads, hearts and senses.

They leaned back on the green sward, crushing the blood-red snow-flowers and purple lupins beneath their weight—their hearts beating together, their lips coming closer and closer. His extended lips had already touched the pouting curves of her burning skin——

When a sharp crack is heard a few feet away, and they darted apart before the anxious lips had a chance to have one clinging press.

Some one had jumped off a log and broken a dead limb.

They just had time to sit up a few feet apart when Miss Hortense appeared on the scene. She noticed nothing; or at least pretended not to no-

tice. But they were trembling like the leaves of the aspin.

In a few minutes, following her, came Mr. Are-gave looking for his better half, and he came so noiselessly that he was right on top of them before being noticed. His wife was then picking a few wild flowers, and probably thinking of what might have been if Miss Hortense had not preceded her lord.

Bynington was afraid to think. There are times in the lives of men when it is better not to think at all.

"A capital place this is to rest," said Mr. Are-gave, rubbing his thumbs. "Capital? Ha! ha! ha! worth twelve per-cent—twelve percent!" And he took his wife's arm in his and they walked off towards the tavern.

Bynington was considerably unnerved by the shock—the numerous things that had transpired in such a short space of time would unnerve anybody.

But looking up and seeing the sweet, mild face of Lillian Hortense bent on his he felt greatly soothed and calmed. He had forgotten for several weeks that her countenance was a soothing balm for anything. He wanted her to sit down on the green grass where the other had been, but she

hastily declined, and seemed to be in a humor to move on.

So they quit the place and threaded their way along the river bank like a little sister and brother returning home from school.

After traveling a little way they came to another bunch of trees overhanging the river, similar to the bower they had left. There were a few sturdy oaks, making a genuine silven grove and woven together by vines of the wild grape as though bound by a band of love. The grape leaves and flowery creepers of tenderer plants had partitioned them off from the river, and in fact had them pretty near surrounded. The vines were woven among the branches of the trees overhead and formed a protection from the rays of the sun, and shut off the view of the surrounding country. When they found their way barred by the profuse foliage they stopped and contemplated the situation. They found nothing there so interesting as a study of each other, and he considered her his guardian angel. He was never so much attracted by her mild beauty as now. They were standing side by side and her modest eyes were cast down. Just one little red spot burning on her cheek, all else was tranquil; a beautiful, good young girl and a picture of modern virtue. She was of a milder nature than Nina Aregave, whom he had just quit, and her

love did not thrill one the same, it rather soothed than blinded one with passion. Now being out of the influence of the other he readily transferred his affections to her.

It may sound peculiar to hear of him making love to one girl just after escaping from the embraces of another, but such was Mr. Bynington doing at this time. In fact, he had met those two women for the first time on the same morning and fell desperately in love with them both.

It was the love which Lillian Hortense had awakened which helped to make him yield so readily to the charms of the enchantress, Nina, when she alighted from the train on that memorable morning, as described in our first chapter. His feelings had been sensitively opened to love and he was just ready to receive a shock. Now he was returning to his first love after a heavy shock.

This thing of falling in love with two beautiful women in one day may seem to be a little out of the common place, but it is true. He had a genuine love for both. No fitting episode to be forgotten when the passion died out, but one that found lodgment deep down in the heart and lasted as long as life.

There are probably people who may doubt this statement, but they must remember that we are

not all constituted alike, and the writer knows whereof he speaks.

Anyway the love for Mrs. Aregave was a hopeless one, or a foolish one at least. It could only pass away an idle hour at best. But there is no knowing what hopes he had built up on gaining the affection of Miss Hortense.

They were now alone in a cosy bower by the river side. The first time they were thrown together in that way. So their talk soon led to love. What more appropriate subject could they discuss on such a scene and at such a time? She occasionally glanced up in his face with those soft mild eyes.

He commenced to tell her how he had fell in love with her the moment he saw her; and how, if she would be his wife, he would have no object in life but to make the world a paradise for her—the world wherein he lived would be for her alone.

He was about to tell her how his thoughts had been averted from her by the dark enchantress of the plains, but all he really wanted in this world was her mild, soothing love; her life mingled with his.

I say he commenced to pour out his love, but, like the impulsive creature that he was, he had never reached the point where he was to ask her to become his wife. Being lately so worked up by passion, he grabbed her in his arms, drew her

rapturously to his breast and showered kiss after kiss on her lips.

That power of resistance, so commendable in preachers and virgins, never was his fort; and the passion so lately aroused and suffered to wear itself out, was now raging stronger than ever. His soul was on fire, and nothing outside of satisfaction would quench it.

I am sorry to note such traits in my hero, especially the lack of resistance and the efforts to break down resistance in others, but I cannot help it. I started in to write this man's history and I must take it as it comes, if it kills me. I said I was writing *Lives*, like my friend, Plutarch, and intended, if these *lives* came out all right, to tackle the "Lives of the Saints." But here I am with a very aggressive life on my hands. If he keeps on getting worse I will have to shirk all responsibility for his actions.

Anyway, he was now hardly responsible for his actions himself, and was trying to force her into the same happy (or silly) condition.

But she managed to free herself; her feelings (if nothing else) were outraged; and when she met the terrible fire in his eyes she was half frightened to death. She tore herself from his

grasp and jumped back, gave one bound and——
Heavens!

They had been standing right at the edge of a cliff, overlooking a deep pool in the river—the thick vines hindered her from seeing where she was going—only one piercing scream came from her lips as she went down through space.

He was too terrified to do anything but stand panting on the bank and gazing in the water.

She had carried the broken vines with her and a few green leaves and pink flowers were floating peacefully on the surface—she had disappeared.

He looked on in silence and noticed all the details of how she went down to the deep. The cliff projected out and she never touched a thing till she struck the water.

“Are there some Fatality above me,” he cried, “that interferes with all my joys and happiness?” And his voice sounded like the heart-rending wail of some wounded-unto-death wild beast. “Well, I will fight that Fate to the bitter end!” And he plunged into the river—bounded around in the water—and finally saw her long hair rise to the surface. He grabbed hold of it and struggled to the shore with his drowned load.

Was she drowned?

“Poor, dear, sweet girl,” he muttered.

He felt her heart, which seemed to be

forever stilled. Her beautiful hair lay on her white, marble breast, and looked as though it had been combed out by the hands of angels; and the drops of water sparkled among the ringlets like diamonds in a bridal veil.

He noticed all this in a few seconds, but it seemed to be several years.

He tried every application he had ever heard of to resuscitate her, but all seemed in vain.

He threw himself on the ground and groaned aloud. His feelings were something dreadful—a murderer—a prisoner—an outcast! He was afraid to think what he was. Then he gathered her up in his arms and pressed his lips to hers again and again. He tried to kiss new life in her, and somehow succeeded, for the fleeting breath returned and her bosom rose and fell once more.

She had been stunned by the fall on the water but had very cleverly clenched her teeth and swallowed very little of it. So when she came to from the shock, or faint, she was really very little injured, only had received a thorough wetting and a severe shaking up.

When she was able to sit up, and say she was not hurt a particle, as she did, he went almost wild with delight. He tried to embrace her again, and talked all sorts of silly nonsense—

blamed himself—but she wanted no consolation, and seemed to be very grave and serious.

So they started for home without any more ceremony, and as they threaded their way through the woods, he could not help thinking, “why did she tear herself away?” That tearing away was fatal to them both. He felt it just as certain as life, and by the looks of her face, she must have felt it to.

Had she not torn herself away so abruptly they would, in all probability, have been bound together for life. He was not the kind of a man to impose on a woman’s good nature. He had never violated the confidence of either man or woman, and considered those who do the most dispicable on earth. But this was to be the termination of their day’s “outing.”

A little act is often momentous, and some times extends into eternity.

As they plodded along on their homeward journey they came to a little ravine. As they went down the slope they noticed an object sticking up in the underbrush ahead of them which looked like an elbow. The chaparral was waving her green leaves over it, and the blades of grass and flowers were dancing merrily around. The foliage was being pressed with something imbued with animal life.

“Why, that cannot be the branches of a tree?”

said Mr. Bynington, drawing his companion's attention to it.

"No," said she, "it is alive." And they walked on down to the place.

When they reached the spot they found Mr. Landers chatting with a young lady, who was gathering flowers in the shrubbery near by. They did not see her face, it was hidden by the leaves. The two seemed to be enjoying themselves, so Mr. Bynington and companion did not disturb them, but turned away and climbed the hill on the other side.

"I will wager that Mr. Landers' sweetheart would not jump in the river," said Mr. Bynington, when they had reached a safe distance.

"It would be better to jump in the river than be ashore with your kind," answered his companion.

"Perhaps Mr. Landers is learning to play on leaves of grass," he continued, "or the mysteries of the Houri dance."

But the fair Lillian made no reply, so he remarked: "This has been an eventful day, and will be remembered by all of us."

Then they trudged along the rest of the way in silence. She did not look much the worse for the plunge in the river; only her wet garments clung to her limbs and showed up to more advantage her lovely, graceful form.

When they reached the hotel she declared she would never speak to him again, and bolted in a side door and out of sight.

* * * * * * * *

As Bynington lay tossing feverishly around on his bed that night one might think he was repenting his past sins and seeking absolution for the future, but he was not. He was suffering the pangs of love unsatisfied, and was complaining bitterly because fate or circumstances, or whatever you might call it, was conspiring against him, and why the women he adored were always slipping from his grasp just as he extended his arms to them—the women he would do so much for.

“Because I dearly love thee so,

Why wilt thou still refuse me, love?

On thee I'd all the world bestow

If thou wouldst let me hug thee, love.”

He murmured in his delirium.

As he lay there half asleep and half conscious, his mother appeared to him in a vision, and in place of upbraiding him for trying to make unhallowed love with members of her sex (as he had reasons to expect if present in the flesh) she sympathized with him and tried to sooth his aching heart. She blamed the unfeeling women who

tormented her sorrowing boy, and in the cool touch of her aerial presence he fell asleep.

He thought over that many times afterward, why his mother, who had lived a good, innocent, upright life, should come to him at such a time, and chide those who he imagined had done him wrong. She seemed to demonstrate to him that man was the weaker sex and woman his tormentor. Being as this is a bit of unexplainable philosophy to me, I give it to the reader for what it is worth; not caring to prejudice his, or her, mind on the subject one way or the other.

A few days after the above occurrences Miss Hortense departed for home in San Francisco, and those who saw her go aboard the train noticed that there was something the matter with her disposition, her health, or both.

What had happened? They never knew.



CHAPTER VIII.

After the gloom of Miss Hortense's departure had dissolved itself in the light air of Castle Crag and Bynington had began to resign himself to the possibility of existing in her absence, he allowed his old fondness for the spouse of Mr. Aregave to creep into his breast again, and every time he looked upon her bewitching face he swore in his inward conscience that he never loved a mortal before but her, and never would love anyone else again, and if he never could get a chance to proclaim his devotion he would go down to his grave admiring her memory as Don Quixote did that of his lady Dulcinea del Toboso. Mrs. Aregave was a sun around which all planets revolve.

One night there was a happy group of youthful lovers sitting and lounging around the veranda of the tavern, watching the lightning play the most fantastic pranks on the jagged peaks of Castle Crag. The night was closed in pitchy darkness,

and the only thing visible was the top of the Crag when the chain of red and yellow fire would dance up and down the deep crevices. Once in a while it would flash out and light up the scene where the watchers stood. The weather was comfortably warm, and they were a very contented group—watching the awe-inspiring fire from heaven and the occasional flash of their companion's eyes to see if they revealed any of the warm, soft feeling of the heart.

The Crag from the tavern show up like sharp irregular spires piercing the blue heavens. On this occasion the lightning had taken control of the mountains as though it was handled by a troop of weird witches. Sometimes it would seem to be playing around the peaks and weaving a web from one jagged spire to another like a spider fastening his gossamer threads to the pipes of a church organ. It would again circle around the lofty dome and crown it with a diadem of golden fire; then it would take a zig-zag shoot down into the inky blackness of some deep crevice, scattering the gloom before it, and then it would go out with a flash, leaving the whole scene in suppressed darkness.

The watchers would cuddle together in solemn silence——

With a flash the whole rugged peak would again be wrapped up in a blaze of glory. The

rays darted down like golden ribbons lighting up the precipitous gorges, wooded mountains and river canyon, three or four miles below, and carried across to illuminate the veranda and mingle with the fire in the lover's eyes.

Again and again it repeated the beautiful phenomena—the lovers becoming more deeply interested and inspired. As the weird lightning increased they clung closer together, as the sublimity of the scene made each mortal more in sympathy with his fellow being.

To clasp a fair hand or draw a tender form to his breast was the first thought of Ben Bynington.

Those thoughts always come to him whenever he was in the presence of death, danger, or overwhelmed by the wonderful works of mother nature. On this occasion his soul was filled with love for his fellow being, and for Nina Aregave particularly.

The feeling may have been more or less reciprocated, as her thoughts walked on the zig-zag of the fiery spheres. She was gliding over the surface of the lightning from peak to peak, and dancing on its emotional currents, like a fairy on a rainbow. As she whirled around she imagined Bynington was stretching out his hand to her; she lost her balance and flung herself from the dizzy wreath of light into his out-stretched arms—the next flash set the whole peak in a crazy-wav-

ing flutter—the first thing she knew she was wrapped in his arms indeed.

Trembling like a leaf!

Darkness for a moment!

The next flash lit up the whole veranda—only a few excited lovers there—she fled after receiving one delightful squeeze—and took refuge by Cloyd Landers, whom one of the Ashland sisters had just deserted after being in pretty nearly the same kind of a delightful tangle.

Landers commenced playing with her at once as an antidote for the serious affairs just enacted. He caught hold of her hand and was pretty near in the act of putting his arm around her waist, when a sudden flash of lightning—which was still dancing around the top of the distant peaks—lit up the scene, and Mr. Aregave (who had just heard the rustling of silken skirts on the outside, and suppressed murmurs, had stepped outside to reconnoiter) beheld his wife in the arms of a sprout of a San Francisco millionaire, who seemed to be in the act of taking great liberties with her.

The old gentleman jumped straight up and down—rubbed his hands—and roared in his wrath.

The party of lightning watchers scattered in a hurry.

Mrs. Aregave vanished to her rooms.

Mr. Landers bolted for the clubhouse where

he bathed his sorrows in gin. He was soon joined by Mr. Bynington. They associated themselves with other convivial souls who were leisurely partaking of mixed drinks through straws, and with songs and stories, cards and wine, they passed the remainder of the night, trying to kill their sorrows, which were at the bottom partly joys—and their joys which were beclouded with an everpresent sorrow.

Mr. Landers was carried to his room while the haze of night was still hovering over the mountains, and he was doubled and twisted all out of shape and had as many squirms to him as an eel.

Bynington navigated his own corporeality to his chamber and endeavored to sleep off his jag.

He awoke the next day feeling a little mean, but after taking a good spunging with ice cold water and a crash towel rub, and exercising his lungs with heavy breathing, he entered upon the routine of the day looking a very little the worse for the wear.

His friend Landers was dead to the world, till he heard that the Aregave's were packing up to leave the hotel that day.

"What? This day?" he plaintively cried when he heard the news in the office. "Thunder and lightning, what is the matter?"

"That is just what the matter is," winked the knowing clerk.

"What?" cried Landers.

"Too much thunder and lightning," responded the clerk archly.

And the young ladies present laughed and giggled to each other, as they started off for a ride up the canyon.

Neither Bynington or Landers had any more to say that day—their jaws fell.

Bynington went out and propped his back up against a tree and suffered the pangs of heart-ache alone, as had been his wont from a little boy.

Many a struggle he had had with that heart—the hardest of all struggles—teaching it to endure defeat, and to resign the only object it loved.

What are the pangs of our worldly, every day affairs compared with this? Were every dollar and every thing we possessed in the world gone to the dogs we could struggle among our fellow men and find more; but what can bring us back that love for which we pine, when it is gone from us forever?

O, the heart-aches and misery that we cannot kill!

Heavens be merciful unto us all!

* * * * *

The Aregave's went away in a sulky mood without bidding any of their friends good-bye.

Of course this was an occasion for Landers to go over to the clubhouse again and soak himself in spirituous and malt liquors. He kept it up until the doctors said it was affecting his heart. Thus contracting one heart trouble to counteract another. That was really robbing Peter to pay Paul.

* * * * * * * *

The dear old happy days never returned to our friends at the tavern that season. The light and happiness had gone out forever. In fact everything seemed to keep going from bad to worse.

The two Misses Ashland and their mamma remained. Mr. Landers had been turning his affection to one of these, and Bynington tried to make a sister of the other, to see if it would fill the void in his heart, which troubled him night and day, and haunted him in sleep.

These two ladies were cultivated daughters of one of California's magnates, prominent in the social swim and one was rather attractive. The other was homely as sin—this was the one Bynington was trying to make a sister of—I cannot admire his taste.

The season was changing, and the time was

coming when it was comfortable to draw into the house.

Night had settled over the landscape, and a slight mountain chill swept down from the vicinity of Mt. Shasta. All the voices were hushed on the broad veranda, and in one of the large parlors four of the guests were enjoying a quiet game of whist.

They played on and on through the long evening till the halls and parlors were quite deserted. The curtains were all closely drawn and peace and quiet reigned supreme.

The personnel of the game were the two Misses Ashland, Mr. Bynington and Mr. Landers. The young ladies were being chaperoned that summer by their mamma, but at this time that good lady was slumbering in the far off annex and her two daughters were entertaining our friends in a sociable game.

Mr. Landers and Miss Alice, who have been more than sociable on several occasions of late, sat opposite each other as partners in the game. The play was waning and the players were becoming more absorbed in one another than in the game. Especially was this the case between Alice and Landers, and as they could do no love-making while fenced off by a man and woman on either side and a heavy table between, they began to

display the antics of two beings who must either make love or fight.

I don't know whether the reader has ever seen two people under just such conditions or not.

She was growing impulsive and peevish, and finally accused her partner of being a dunce.

"I would rather have a doll baby to play with than you," she said.

"Oh, ho, you crazy thing, I have won every point in the game," he replied.

"You do not know a point when you see it," returned the maiden, throwing her cards down on the table.

"I know this," said he, catching hold of her hand and drawing her toward him.

She gathered up a handful of cards and threw them in his face, when he released her hand.

Then she jumped up while he was leaning over the table, and putting both hands on top his head, pressed his face down among the scattered pasteboards. She was itching for mischief, and evidently got it, for when she relieved him and ran from the room he followed her.

The halls were dark, excepting a few electric bulbs left burning in a recess here and there. The guests had all retired and the night clerk was dozing in the office.

She ran along through the carpeted halls, up a flight of stairs and over into the annex, closely

followed by Mr. Landers. She supposed he would quit the chase when she dodged in her private chamber, next to that of her mamma's.

She vanished in the room as soon as she turned the corner of the hall, and he had the wonderful nerve to chase around the corner a few yards behind and follow her in. I am backward about recording this, but I am compelled to be true to my history, while entirely dumbfounded by the transpacificcoast gall of young Landers.

The chamber into which Landers bolted was wrapped in darkness, save for the dim light that floated in through the transom and closely curtained windows.

He saw the outlines of the white form for which he chased standing by her couch, and, panting like a hound after a hare, had the audacity (dare I state it?) to rush up and throw both his arms rapturously around her person.

The other two players sat in the parlor looking at each other. It was evident that the game had broken up in a row. They waited for the pair to return, but stillness had settled down in the establishment.

But they had not long to wait before dreadful shrieks of

"Murder!"

"Burglars!"

“Robbers!”

“Cutthroats!”

“Horsethieves!”

“Desperadoes!”

came from many throats in the distant wing, called the annex.

Bynington ran through the halls in that direction, falling over ghostly figures that were running out of every room.

Young damsels, scared out of their departments, had blockaded the way, with their hair hanging down their backs and the sweet incense of slumber still surrounding their charms. In fact some of them had very little else around them.

All the clerks, porters and watchmen were set scurrying the hotel, but not a robber or horse-thief could they find.

It took sometime to find out where all the rum-pus started, but the Misses Ashland finally located it in the chamber of their mamma. The lady heard some villain come into her room just as she was in the act of retiring, and before she had time to cry out, was suddenly seized by the scoundrel, who might have been intending to strangle her, for all she knew—but with remarkable forethought and cool determination for a lady of her years and sedate habits, she brought both of her plump arms up under his chin and sent him reel-

ing across the room. She then screamed and he vanished through the window and out on the veranda, while she fell back exhausted.

"Oh, it was terrible!" the lady said.

Her daughter Alice came rushing in to her assistance, but the latter could not see the robber-hugger "atal' atal'," and tried to persuade her mamma that she was only dreaming and had cried out in her sleep, which made the old lady feel worse than being hugged.

"I know better than that, you silly child!" declared her mamma. "For—heavens—to think of it—he had his arms clear around me!"

"Now, you know he couldn't, mamma, because you weigh about three hundred pounds, and no man could reach so far?"

"You impertinent child, go off to bed!" returned her forebearer, angered at the insinuations about her avoirdupois. "Just think—he might have gone in your room, and that would have been awful!"

"Wouldn't it though!—to be caught in such a pair of arms."

* * * * *

There was nothing discussed the next day but the robbery, or attempted robbery, and the facts of the matter were never clearly explained.

Mr. Landers renewed his engagement at the clubhouse on that date and steeped his carcass in the strongest alcoholic beverages to be found there. He just loaded his system up to the hilt in strong drinks and red wine till he saw the clubhouse get up and float down the river with the trees and the rocks and the crags dancing around it. Then little imps rose up out of the stream and others came down from the peaks to fight over him.

He was put to bed for a high fever, and as soon as he was able to travel the doctors shipped him off to his parents in the city.

Bynington went away too, but he returned. He renewed his brotherly affections for the Ashland sisters, but on cultivating their acquaintance he found that their tastes and ambitions were different from his. They had a veneration of wealth and aristocracy which did not agree with his democratic, bohemian notions at all. So he could not help contrasting them with the sweet Miss Hortense. He would lay down in the shade of a tree and dream of her—of her pretty mild face and graceful form. It was the only soothing balm then in his existence, to think of her and her pretty mild eyes, as he had seen her stretched out on the green sward, or reclining on the comb of the porch resting her chin in her hands, her form laying carelessly along and her gray eyes

looking calmly at the hills and trees. She was a picture to attract most any living mortal.

But, alas! he was only dreaming. She had gone, and he had not the courage to follow her and try to win her love, which was really a jewel, worthy the affections of any American citizen, or foreign king.

He saw all this when she was gone, and longed to fly away south with the birds and throw himself at her feet, but he was afraid of the reception that might be accorded him. He imagined her surrounded by wealthy admirers at the Bay and would probably not entertain advances from him anyway, after what had happened, and now that she had returned to her people. Why should she, when there surely must be plenty far more prepossessing men than he ready to throw their hearts and fortunes at her feet? While he was nothing, anyway, but a piece of drift-wood on the verge of creation, pelted about by every tide.

But, had he only known it, he had created the most lasting impression in the mind of Miss Hortense. She was young then and her heart was soft like the mud, or littoral deposits at the bottom of a disiccated inland pond during a period of transition between the Jurassic and the Cretaceous ages, that received the impressions of the trees and ferns along the shore. So that in after centuries when those littoral deposits have become

solid rock you may break it where you will and the shadow of those trees and ferns are inwoven in its core in every conceivable direction. Even so was her heart with the shadow of Ben Bynington, though her short sad life did not give it time to harden. His brilliant, reckless nature had quite captivated her fancy, and it was all to end in a sad tragedy.



CHAPTER IX.

While Bynington was cultivating the friendship of the Ashland sisters, dreaming of Miss Hortense and debating in his mind whether to stay or fly to some other clime, the trains were bringing up to the tavern new faces every day.

As the personnel at a summer resort is undergoing a continuous change. Some of these new arrivals considered themselves the smarter of the smarter set—some of them too smart for anything—knew it all and more to. They were really the exclusive of the exclusive (in their own minds). Everybody outside of their circle was *nadie*, and should be dumped in the river, or fed to the fishes.

They had heard of the world-famous dramas which had been given at the tavern, as well as the beauty of Nina Aregave and the talents of Ben Bynington, and of several other things which had happened, and others that had not happened. The renown of all these had floated down to the Bay and caused a ripple in society circles there.

So, of course, the new comers must have dramas, operas, mysterious excursions and so on.

They arranged to put a drama on the boards one night, and fixed up a stage in one of the halls leading from the office for that purpose. The stage was pretty and luxurious. The curtains being of rich tapestry, imported from Persia, Turkey or Ind by the family of some man who had made millions developing the resources of the Pacific Coast. Everything else was grand in proportion, which I will not bother describing here.

The promoters invited Mr. Bynington to take a part, and he was requested to select a portion of Shakespeare's grand-stand-play, Julius Cæsar.

Mr. Bynington at the time was not in a very agreeable mood, and besides he did not have a very exalted opinion of some of the ultra-ultra guests, who were aping to such an extent that they were killing off the vegetation of the Sierras with their agony.

He had an idea that some of those fashionable people who were displaying royal crests, and talking of marrying their daughters to foreign dukes and lords did not spring from the notable ancestry they boasted of. And in fact he was heard to remark that their mothers had put in many days over the washtub, while their fathers were probably scouring the town with old T D pipes in their mouths, looking up baby napkins and miners'

underwear for their better halves to exercise their charms over.

This kind of talk helped to widen the breach between them. So he came before the footlights that night as though he was going to a sawmill. It was noticed that he paid no attention to his toilet, and of course in that audience they thought more about their dress than anything which might come from the mind. Two dressy young dudes commenced to make fun of him before he had time to speak.

"Yes, he will make us tired," said one.

"Give us your latest hippodrome from Julius Cæsar," said the other.

He took in the situation at a glance, and caring nothing for the appreciation of this audience, started in with:

"*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quarum unam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur. Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se differunt. Gallos ab Aquitanis Garumna flumen, a Belgis Matrona et sequana dividit. Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate——'*"

"Let up with your French!" shouted the two young dudes, interrupting the speaker.

And the stylish audience became dreadfully in earnest at once and very indignant. The most

ignorant of them had to give themselves away with the two dudes, and broke in with, "you need not be exercising your French on us to show how well educated you are."

One of the dudes made answer, "No indeed. I have studied French in the quartier latin, Paris, myself."

And nobody groaned at his illimitable gall.

Even one of the elderly matrons lacked sense enough to keep her mouth shut on such an important occasion. She was a buxom old lady, who had known a great deal more about the washtub and the formation of suds in her younger days than the forms of language, but who was now well dressed, well fed, fat and rich, with great diamonds sparkling from her plump old fingers and vulgar throat. She had the hardihood to squeal out, "Don't you be trying any of your French airs on us'ns!"

"French! Who is talking French?" asked our hero, surprised.

"You requested a selection from Julius Cæsar, and I gave you the commencement of Cæsar's Gallic Wars, written by himself."

The house caught the turn of the tide and roared. The two dudes thought best to slink out of the audience.

When quiet was restored Bynington left the

stage with: "‘Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.’”

They had hurt his sensitive nature, and when any wound was made in his feelings it was very difficult to heal. The spell of friendship once broken would never unite again.

He had no inclination to associate any longer with that set and departed for San Francisco, with a probable intention of trying his fortunes with Miss Hortense, the more honorable part of his twin loves.

He had heard a rumor that she was sick, but he would go to the city and give her his heart and soul, if she would have it.

When he reached the city he heard she was dead. The blow fell on him like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. It stunned him as though he was being crushed by a tremendous rock-crusher that was stamping out every fiber of life.

With a kind of a dull, half conscious movement he left his hotel and started for her home.

After walking about a block on Market street he hailed a carriage and ordered the driver to drive him to — street. He stopped a few numbers away from the right one, dismissed the conveyance and walked up to the fine rock mansion.

But his nerves were unstrung. He could not go in and see her people. Doubtful of the reception awaiting him, anyway.

That gray pile of rock looked too cold and forbidding—the fogs and the winds from the Golden Gate had been beating against it for years—he dare not let his thoughts go any further than the walls of the building.

So he walked up and down the block a few times to brace his nerves.

Finally he mustered up courage and walked firmly up the steps and rang the bell.

A maid came to the door, and ushered him into the reception room, after a few questions, and after taking his card to be delivered to Mrs. Hortense.

As he sat in the room, his senses keenly alive to every sound, he cast his eyes around the department and noticed that it was fitted up in a refined luxury. He knew that some delicate, artistic hand presided over that house, and began to wonder if it was not the hand of her forever stilled who was the presiding genius of the place. The picture of a man looked down upon him from the wall. It was the strong visage of one of the men who had shaped the destiny of California. He

new by the resemblance that it was the father, who had nothing now left on this earth but his shadow in a frame on the wall. His eyes were drawn from this to the shadow of another. There—there were those mild eyes looking down on him. Sweet, dear girl in all her beauty.

The picture had the power to draw him to it. A calm, mystic sensation was thrown around him. She seemed to be with him in the wild woods, or at some still old church or mission on a calm Sunday afternoon, and he was conscious of a smell of myrrh and sandalwood. He might be taking her hand at a wedding—the thoughts of a wedding—if he could only clasp that hand again!

As the thoughts of what might have happened, flooded his mind, his feelings softened and the tears were very near breaking through the fountains of light.

A tall, graceful, refined woman, with a few silver threads in her hair, glided softly into the room before he was aware and extended a pretty little hand to him.

He arose and returned the greeting, and as he looked in her eyes, she noticed the pathetic, melting look in his—took out her handkerchief and sobbed piteously.

They sat there fifteen or twenty minutes, both sad and distressed.

She told all about the end—and there was no blame whatever laid to him—though he could not help thinking himself guilty.

"I knew that her death was really caused by a tragedy," went on this mother, who really looked as though she might be Lillian grown old. "She caught cold in the mountains."

"Did she speak of me?" he finally ventured to ask.

"Oh yes! She said that you was on the river bank with her when she fell through the thick foliage that hid the precipice and river. And I could tell you lots besides.

"She loved you!

"She died with your name on her lips.

"'Save me, Bynington!' were the last words uttered, as she sank into forgetfulness.

"Oh! oh!! oh!!! Lillian! Lillian!! Lillian!!! my child! my child!!"

The cries of this mother would break anyone's heart—and Bynington felt himself to be the meanest man on earth. He had been afraid that he would be blamed, and now, he wished that all the blame could be put on him. He never realized his selfishness so strongly as at this time.

"Would to God that I could have died for her," were the thoughts that crowded his mind, but he felt too bad to utter them.

Had he been the cause of all this sorrow, and responsible for the death of the noblest girl he ever met in his life? To think over it would kill him. He could not find strength to say one word. But sat and listened to the poor mother's sobs.

"I must leave you now, dear Mrs. Hortense!" he finally cried, with a longing to be alone in the

open air. "I cannot hear any more, believe me! If I could only give my life for hers. But it is too late! too late! I am a wretch!

"May heaven always protect you."

He kissed her hand, while she held the handkerchief to her face, and his lips touched her cheek. That touch on the cheek seemed to be to him in after life a benediction.

He hurried from the house and out into the sharp sea-tempered air.

He ran along the street for an hour and a half. Not knowing where he was going, or not caring, just so he kept moving—kept down the feeling that was tearing at his heart.

When he became exhausted, and found himself alone in the dark street—for it was night—he hunted up a street which cars ran on, and, as all roads lead to Rome, so all street cars in San Francisco lead down Market street and to the big hotels.

* * * * *

He at last found himself in his room, closed the door and tossed his exhausted form upon the bed.

"Lillian! Lillian!! Lillian!!!"

"O, my head! my head!! Hold my head to keep it from splitting!"



And he probably would have gone crazy, only the tears were always near his eyes—a weakness inherited from his mother—and they broke loose now and flowed in torrents.

He cried like a child, only so much more piteously. A strong heart was breaking, in preference to being turned into that of a lunatic.

“Father redeem this bitter cup, if thus thy sacred will!”

After a few hours struggle with himself his sorrow was greatly assuaged.

He had outlived tragedies before, but none so pathetic as this one. To think that the only known person who might share the sunshine of life with him—might be a life companion through joys and sorrows—had really faded from the face of the earth, and left not a vestige of her lovely form.

How pathetic it is to realize that a loved one has disappeared for the last time. We see her depart in health and strength, not thinking but what we may meet again tomorrow; but through all time, through all eternity, we are never to gaze upon that being again. Never! never! never!

This scene is growing too sad. If I kept on this way I would have to kill him off. I may have to kill him off yet, or marry him to a widow.

CHAPTER X.

It was a busy day in the metropolis of the Pacific Coast and our hero was seated by one of the little tables in the grand court of the leading hotel where he could lean back in the tempered light from the immense lofty glass roof and read the daily papers. The court was surrounded by magnificent lofty columns of fine white marble, faced with glass, and tropical plants and flowers added to the luxury of the scene. He sat there carelessly perusing the big sheets and occasionally glancing around at the busy throng who hurried through the corridors of that wonderful caravansary.

As some fashionable gentlemen went by a young man deviated from the throng and laid his hand on Bynington's shoulder, and—making sure who it was—embraced him familiarly.

"Dear old Bynington, you here?" "I never expected to see you again."

And looking up he beheld the jovial countenance of Cloyd Landers.

"Well! if here isn't the very same Cloyd of the mountains and the glens, the forests and the greenwood springs!

"My good angel, I am more than delighted to meet with thee again!"

And they greeted each other with the affection of two brothers.

"Be seated, Landers, and let me hear your tale of woe and narrative of conquests,"—and he pulled one of the chairs around to his companion.

But Landers declined the proffered seat and declared that he must have something to eat before entering on a long conversation with an unseen-friend of many months.

"Well, then, suppose we adjourn to the Grill Room?" suggested Bynington.

"The very thing I was about to propose," said Landers, "as I have been running around town and am as hungry as a grizzly."

Our boon companions departed without further par lance, and seating themselves at one of the tables in that clean, savory-conducted department of San Francisco's greatest caravansary, ordered something grilled.

I know of no better dining place for a hungry man to sit down to eat in the United States than this same place. Everything is cooked right

within one's sight, and the very air seems to coax an appetite. Comfort, luxury and good-cheer are combined in everything that meets the eye or the senses.

The diners scattered around at the little tables are more interesting than the surroundings. There can be seen the men who made California (at least could be when the heroes of this narrative were there). There are the controllers of the great railroad lines; the Croesus of the huge banking establishments; the bonanza kings from the exhaustless mines of the Pacific Coast, reckless of money and flavored of quartz and gold; the men who "mold public opinion" in the press of the State; and actors and artists of the city and the world. And the younger generation can be seen mingling with the remnants of the stock of forty-nine—the offsprings of the wealthy and the budding dudes are all in that historical establishment satisfying their appetites and sipping wine.

It is a splendid place in which to sit and talk leisurely with a friend, as it is not characterized with the rush of a restaurant, and the furnishings are spotlessly clean—it conveys an atmosphere of the wealth of the Golden Gate, and was the biggest undertaking of the days of old, the days of gold and the days of forty-nine.

Both Bynington and Landers recognized many of the prominent men present (women are barred

from this department) and exchanged greetings while waiting for their orders to be grilled.

"I suppose, Landers, you never carry a jag around with you when in San Francisco?" queried Mr. Bynington, feeling his friend's appetite for liquid refreshments.

"No, not recently, at least," answered Mr. Landers, "and to tell you something confidentially and of great importance to large interests on this Coast, I am going to be married." And he looked at his companion to see if he was not staggered by the great importance of the disclosure.

"Good, my boy, the best thing in the world," answered the other without feeling concerned in the least. "But who is the misfortunate creature?—I mean the fortunate one?"

"Miss Ashland."

"Which—the elder and homely one?"

"No! you cynic, the very charming Alice—the younger of the sisters."

"It is a pretty sad affair."

"It will be a grand affair. All the morning papers will devote columns of their space to describing the transaction and adorn the top of the page with our pictures."

"That will be something elegant indeed. 'Top of column, next to pure reading matter, with no display ads. on either side,' as the advertising agent says."

"And it will be such a notable event in society. There are few men in the city considered a better catch than myself, if I do say it."

"That's what I say, Landers, old boy. You are a bird, but it isn't everybody who knows it. Is her mamma willing?"

"I presume so. You know I had a scene with her once."

"In the room at the hotel?"

"Yes."

"And you was worse scared than she was."

"When I found I had hold of the wrong person, in the wrong room, I was ready to drop."

"You was afraid she would claw your eyes out."

"The thoughts of it would drive a man to drink."

"And it doesn't take a very great force to drive you either. I suppose you are not backward about marrying a girl and dividing up your time between her and the jag?"

"O! I don't intend to marry until I return from the Keeley cure."

"I see. You will go to one of these places to have the whiskey cured. Then you will have a new poison to mingle with the other. These are poor inheritances to commence a family with."

They will show up sure as fate—all chickens come home to roost, sooner or later."

"What's the use of being so conscientious about a little thing like that? I know plenty men who have drunken wives."

"That's so. But I think you would have a touch of conscientious jar at uniting yourself with a pure young girl after all your little scrapes."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing very serious. You know you have had several little flirtations (to put it mildly) with divers women."

"All the young men nowadays run indiscriminately with women, and I am no better than the rest of them."

"And I suppose you demand that the girl you marry be as chaste as a piece of marble, which could not be penetrated with a chisel? (I am not hinting at anything I heard in the Crag country)."

"Most emphatically I do! You don't suppose I would marry a girl whom there was one suspicious thought about?" replied Landers, growing vehement at the idea.

"I see. You are like the great Julius himself—'Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion'—but

now, to be plain with you, Mr. Landers, what right have you to associate with desolute women and then demand that the girl you marry be as spotless as the driven snow? (of course I would not say that men are getting fooled on the 'spotlessness,' question as well as women). The fact that other men do the same is no excuse for you. What business have you with virgins?"

"I have heard a great deal of nonsense about virgins already. A virgin is principally valuable for what may be expected of her in the future."

"I thought I was the greatest sinner in the world, but I believe you are worse. If an expression of that kind should get out it would shock the community. The laws of Nature demand a restraint on women, or they suffer——"

"I see. Your 'chickens' again."

"Chickens coming home are disagreeable things, but depend upon it they will come."

"Well, what would you advise me to do?" finally asked Landers, quite dejected.

"Go get thee to a nunnery—or, I mean—send the girl to a nunnery."

"You think that would be the better plan?" asked Landers, growing more serious.

"No! I know you would not take my advise anyway, and then I am really opposed to anybody going to a nunnery. It is better for a girl to marry most any kind of a man—capable or in-

capable—than to go throw her life away to the idea of chastity, soliciting or dispensing charity, and fingering over her beads.

“ ‘The Spaniard, when the lust of sway
 Had lost its quickening spell,
 Cast crowns for rosaries away,
 An empire for a cell;
 Yet better had he neither known
 A bigot’s shrine, nor despot’s throne,’

sang Byron, and of course a bigot’s shrine is a poor place for anybody. I like chastity, but would rather not see it used in that way.”

“Well, here! It is not right to make any light remarks about these sisters who enter nunneries. You have been philosophizing to me, and here you are getting more profane than I.”

“I am still philosophizing. I do not believe it is right for a woman to devote her life to the idea of celibacy. To be good is one thing; to be too good is another. Total abstinence of that kind is a crime.”

“Unless a person wishes to live such a life.”

“No. Society has a right to demand certain duties from its members, and none have a right to retire themselves without good cause.”

“Why, part of the Christian population look upon these nuns as being worthy of worship.”

“With due respect for the consideration of these pious people,” asserted Bynington, warmly, “I must

decidedly scout the idea. Because a girl lays aside the natural duties of life and immures herself in a convent, should she become an object of worship? Well, I must candidly tell you she is not the kind of woman man worships. He always has and always will worship his mother (or his lover). Did you ever hear of men going out to the cemeteries to place flowers upon the graves of dead virgins—old or young?"

"Well, hardly."

"One of the oldest pictures in the world, and the most beautiful, is the picture of a young mother and her child. There is nothing else to compare with it; it is symbolic of our race.

"I seriously think that the founders of the Christian religion stole the picture from the ancients and made it a 'Blessed Virgin and Child,' in place of a 'Blessed Mother and her Child'—there is no name more holy blessed than that of mother—no other memory that will be kept so green—no other sentiment as tender—or that will outlast the corroding rust of time.

"Oh mother! you need no defense of your reputation."

"So you think that the first duty of every woman is to raise a family," said Landers.

"There is no duty imposed upon a woman in this world that is half as grand as rearing a family—all the priests and ranters between here and

hades could not convince me to the contrary. Nor the 'new woman,' with her criminal practices of trying to shirk that duty; nor anyother faction who undertakes to frustrate the will of nature—For heaven's sake let nature take her course—especially in California, where she has so many enemies.

"No other clime has rear'd a race diffused
With elements so grand, nor none abused."

As usual his conversation had grown so interesting that it attracted a crowd, and the two friends saw it become necessary to disappear, or hire a hall, so they vanished.

They went for a drive through the Park, around the Presidio and the Golden Gate, where they could have a good view of that harbor (one of the grandest in the world) and to which their Bay of Naples (boasted of and written about so much and so often) and other European and Asia estuaries do not begin to compare. The Golden Gate, though not known to fame, or handed down in ancient song and story, is more commanding, and the cliffs are more lofty and picturesque than the Golden Horn, Dardenelles, Cape Sigæum (flanked by the Hellespont and by the sea), where the waves of the Bosphorus lash the shores of Europe and Asia, or in fact, than anyother inlet from any ocean we know of.

Our two friends reined up behind the big guns at the Presidio, which commands the entrance to San Francisco bay, and gazed long at the inspiring panorama stretched before them. There were great ships gliding through the silvery Golden Gate to meet the rough swell of the trackless Pacific ocean; others coming in laden with the commerce of Asia, Japan, India, Australia and the islands of the sea; and in the offing were crafts of sail and steam picking up the wealth of the Coast from Chile to Alaska. The Marin hills and Alcatraz Island were standing out like living sentinels in the distance to warn the bristling guns in case a foe should dare to pass. And the clear atmosphere enabled them to see up the harbor through San Pablo and Suisun Bays for a distance of fifty miles—a harbor in which all the commerce of the world could ride at anchor. They pondered thoughtfully over the possibilities that await this great mart in the future, and then resumed their ride around to the Cliff House and Golden Gate Park. And that Park! why there is not another park on the face of the globe that is capable of making a green spot on its features. Not even the Hesperian Gardens famed of old. California has many big things, but none have been nourished so assiduously as this Park—the pride of San Francisco and the State at large.

Bynington had seen about all the famous Parks of the world, and he contrasted them with this one for the edification of Landers, as they rode around its sheltered glens and elegant drives.

Landers told him about his coming wedding and his hopes of being first sobered up by the "gold cure."

"I understand the Aregave's are now cutting a wide swath in New York," said Landers after he tired himself and friend talking of his own affairs.

"Are they?" asked his companion.

"Yes. The woman who so fascinated us with a glance is holding the same sway over the female-killing population of the Atlantic Coast. I told you that you loved in vain."

"I am used to that."

"Do you know there is something strange about that marriage? The woman acts as though she had a longing."

"I did not know that you was such a judge of human nature as that. It is a longing for something lacking."

"Why? Do you think so too?"

"I thoroughly understood the situation from the start."

"It is a bad way to use a woman."

"It accounts for some of her actions too."

"I think there was something between you and her."

"No. If she was used right she would be a great woman—one of the best in the world." And he sighed deeply.

Landers noticed the troubled look on his face and made no further remark.

They dined together at the Cliff and returned to the city under the cover of night. Landers buoyant with the hopes of youth, and what the world and wealth had in store for him (not counting the Keeley Cure); Bynington grave and still brooding over his deep sorrow.



A CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS

PART II.

CHAPTER I.



IN San Francisco Bynington found no rest for the soles of his feet, or imagined he didn't. The sad memory of the mission which took him there soon hastened his departure, and it was not long until he found himself back in the mountains. He was a wanderer anyway and could easily find an excuse for changing his place of abode, and then, the mountains suited him better than any where else. So, behold, our hero back at a resort where it was supposed

he had taken his departure for good.

Through the long and lonely fall Bynington haunted his accustomed walks of the summer and

dreamed of the dear ones departed. His heart was sore, and sad and miserable were his feelings. He longed to fly away south with the birds and follow those he loved; but where could he go? His love was dead and cold. And sad and solemn were the recollections of it.

And his other love—it was too sad to think of; and, anyway, she had departed for the East with her husband and was well out of harm's way.

It is the most natural thing in the world for the living to think of the living and gradually forget the dead, and had the living object of his affections been within reach he might have turned to her for sympathy, at this time, but she was not there, and there was nothing within his reach to cling to; so beneath the shadow of the falling leaves Nature taught him to resign.

He sat down on the mountain side and watched the foliage—the turning of the dainty leaves from green to red and brilliant hues. Probably the only case in nature where the touch of death is more beautiful than the bloom of youth.

* * * * *

In the meantime Mrs. Aregave was taking the fashionable part of New York by storm. She was just the belle of the town—fell upon it like a meteor from a clear sky. And what an unprece-

dented flurry she was cutting in that society, all unintentionally to. The people with whom she came in contact became smitten with her charms—especially the masculine portion—and had she desired to be a little “speedy” the disturbances in domestic relations would have been notorious; but as it was the bald-headed hubbys and budding youths only made uninteresting fools of themselves. She would not entertain any of their advances, and was put down as being “true as steel” to her elderly lord, which was considered to be a virtue worse than a vice in the smart town of Gotham.

But her short stay there became famous. Her exceptional beauty, winning ways and sweet voice endeared her to all with whom she came in contact and many of our New York readers undoubtedly remember her to this day. The California colony in that metropolis had never produced such a creation before, and those who preceded her from the Pacific Coast with millions looking for a higher society and the latest importation of a foreign nobility, to exchange beauty and gold for a title, were entirely forgotten. She was not only a fad but an object of worship. Many of her admirers urged her to go on the stage, where her beauty and musical talents would win a world-wide reputation and undying fame, but she scouted such an

idea—what did she want of a reputation and a famous name.

The world and posterity were destined to know of her anyway—and perhaps a great deal more than was for her own good.

The season drew to a close at Castle Crag and Bynington took himself off to one of the little towns in the vicinity, made friends with the natives, miners, railroaders, sawmillers, woodchoppers and mountaineers, whom he had not taken the trouble to notice before, but with whom he had now become the best of friends. There was a touch of nature about him that made him kin with all classes—just one of Nature's children he was, and nothing more. He found the same fellowship with the sawmiller, the woodchopper, the railroader and the country merchant he did with the millionaire, speculator, professional man or man of literature. Of course the woodchoppers, etc., lacked polish; were more of the earth, earthy, and could only talk about their trade; but that is about all the others could talk about. The men of letters, or the stage, were more of his own kind than any of those others.

"And there is no class," says du Maurier, "where the welcome is so likely to be so genuine and sincere, so easy to win, so difficult to outstay, where the memory of us will be kept so green, as among

the people of our own calling and profession." And the author of "Trilby" is strictly right in this. Bynington had been partly aware of this truth for a long time himself, though he certainly had never read "Trilby," as those things transpired at the Craggs long before the event of that work or its author. But he remembered the pleasant excursions he had with literary people, and the delightful associations with the Bohemians of the quill and stage in different cities, as the most enjoyable periods of his life. And he had a strong inkling that they would be the truest and most enduring friends he would ever know. Their sympathies were his and so were their aims in life. He had crossed the continent several times with manipulators of the quill, when everybody had left their cares at home and were out on a lark, and those were the happiest occasions of all. Each one seemed to act as a stimulant for the other; and while they knew that they would return to their labors with regrets because the picnic was over, they would be sustained and strengthened as never before.

He remembered, even, that there was a strong kinship between him and the literary women, and the memory of several of those were still cherished in the inner confines of his heart as being his true sisters on a common plane. But the "new woman," with all her arrogance and crowding to

the front, did not enter his good graces at all. She was not the kind to win his affections, and a woman who could not arouse the fire of love in him must be a mistaken creation, because he had pretty nearly love enough to take in the whole sex. He believed that woman was born to "minister delight to man, to beautify the earth," and not to be his opponent.

CHAPTER II.

But our hero Bynington, a man of many climes and skies, now fell into the society of the little town in the mountains, and also into the ways of its inhabitants, just when the fall rains were setting in, and amused himself during part of the disagreeable season by playing poker, or indulging in whatever other kind of "elevating" amusement came in his way. He would play any game of cards which the woodchopper, sawmiller, bullwhacker, stagedriver, railroader or merchant would, and he did not always come out loser either. He had played the same game with both millionaire and sharper, and knew they were all frauds.

In that town there lived a rather prosperous merchant named Viebrasit, who was a dealer in general merchandise, drugs and medicines, tallow and hides, cordwood and miners' supplies. In fact he did about all the business in the town, from putting up a pill to putting up a coffin.

Now Mr. Viebrasit was a man of family, of more than lawful age, of much wealth and had unlimited credit. He was one of the substantial creations of the place, intrusted with many public trusts and responsibilities, and looked upon with good favor by his neighbors as being just and upright in all his dealings, which he undoubtedly was. He was one of the first men whom Bynington became acquainted with in the place. Our hero soon learned that the pill- and sugar-sand-mixer, and public-trust-holder, was quite a philosopher in his way. He was an active politician, of course, had stumped the county for the Populist party, and made temperance his main hobby. He was holding office at the time under the great Populistic banner, but he was ready at any time to desert that standard for the cause of sobriety. He read Bynington many lectures on temperance and also lectured him on the evils of gambling, till the latter was ashamed to let him know that he knew how to shuffle a card.

One day Bynington walked into Viebrasit's store and they had quite an argument over the best methods to pursue in order to put a stop to the liquor traffic.

"I tell you it is no use, the saloons must be rooted out," said Mr. Viebrasit, warming up to his subject. "Look at the crime and misery they are causing? A man who goes into one of those dens

of iniquity and pours a lot of alcoholic poison down his throat is destroying his body and ruining his business.

"Look at the effects of it on every hand?

"See the old drunks on the streets, begging for something to eat?

"What made them so?

"What made them so, I say?

"They are going to ruin, ruin, ruin!"—as he hammered the counter with his fists.

"I tell you I am not going to rest until I see the liquor business stopped, entirely—entirely!"

"How are you going to stop it?" ventured Bynington, quizzically.

"Put the license up so high that they cannot afford to sell it; or pass laws to stop the manufacture altogether.

"I tell you the time is coming when there will be no liquor sold in this country, or no gambling either. It must come.

"The end of whiskey selling is coming—sure!" as he excused himself out of the store, and told his side-headed clerk that he had some important business up town.

"Yes, it is, like hell," said the clerk, as that worthy brushed a year's accumulation of dust off of a bolt of faded muslin, and rooted out some unlawfully-stored deer skins that had been fenced off from the spectator by cobwebs.

Bynington walked out of the store and looked

around the rain-soaked street, and the lopped-off sidewalks, and concluded that he was not worth reforming, anyway; so he would return to the saloon and join his intellectual friends in the poker game—which was most always in session.

When he entered the place he was dumbfounded to see his friend Viebrasit, not in the poker game; but seated at the Piute table, playing with the woodchopper, the bullwhacker, the railroader, the log driver, the blacksmith, the butcher and the butcher's boy.

The Chinaman and "nigger" were barred. So the two last named gentlemen were watching the game. The "Nigger" relating to his companion his experience while in San Quentin prison.

Piute is a trifling, petit larceny game, borrowed from the Indians, to demoralize their usurpers. The Chinaman was barred from the game because he claimed to have "shlee paree takee the monee, all the slamee;" and the "coon" had been thrown out because he said "that's the boy!" and attempted to take down the "pot" when he only had a queen and jack.

Mr. Bynington, as we stated, was rather startled to see Mr. Viebrasit in the game, and he looked to see if he did not feel a little unnerved, but that gentleman was perfectly at ease and was leisurely shuffling the cards in a way that showed him to be no novice at the sport.

They turned up the "lowest for the drinks," and when Viebrasit was asked what he would take, he answered. "Whiskey and sugar, of course."

Bynington noticed that he took a long and strong drought of it to; and every time the drinks were called for that day he took the same old "Whiskey and sugar, of course."

Our hero Bynington was no chicken by any means, as he had met many queer people in his life—and was a little queer himself—so this inconsistency on the part of his friend Viebrasit had very little effect on his nervous system—only to make him think that much less of humanity—and was soon forgotten.

So Bynington, who only intended to remain over night in the town, or a day or two at the utmost, found himself lingering there throughout the fall and winter—playing poker, talking temperance and attending the dances.

CHAPTER III.

The snow commenced to fall very early that winter, and kept a falling—falling as it knows how only in that Mt. Shasta region—just tumbling on the ground in big wet chunks.

The railroad which wound around the base of Mt. Shasta, threatened to be blockaded early in the season and a big rotary snowplow was brought up for the purpose of keeping it open. And that is how it happened that Bynington came to be a passenger one day on the big plow. This all happened a good many years ago, and the present inhabitants were not living here then.

It was on a cold, snowy morning, with a dark leaden sky, and the snow coming down in sulky wet flakes that the rotary might have been seen chawing the thick snow on its way north over the bleak summit. It was trying to open up the road and meet the south-bound express, which was stalled in a big snowdrift on the other side of the divide.

The rotary held its way well, cut the white flakes, tossed them in the air, and finally came up to the blockaded train puffing like a lion. The Superintendent of the road, who had charge of the operations, soon saw the helplessness of moving the train load of passengers without assistance of a gang of snow shovelers, as the heavy fall had beaten in around the sides of the cars, closed up the windows and had the poor train completely in its possession, to buffet with at will. It was at the mercy of the elements, helplessly covered up in the drift and one could almost walk across the top of the coaches on the snow.

The passengers looked famished, and the wood was giving out; but there was nothing to be done, unless they turn cannibals and draw lots to see who they feed upon first.

The rotary could do nothing but go back the way it came before the snow got deep enough to blockade it in the cut.

Just as the plow was about to return and beat its way south Bynington noticed a familiar face at one of the Pullman car windows, and to his utter surprise and astonishment, on going into the coach, he ran against his old friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Aregave.

"Well!"—well—they were all too much surprised to speak. But Bynington had managed to

exclaim "Well!" to the lady, as they recognized each other at a glance.

"Well!"—said Bynington, clasping her extended hand,—where in the world did you come from?"

"I might ask that question of you," answered the lady. "Mr. Aregave!" and the old gentleman noticed that some one was talking to his wife, when she called his attention.

His thoughts were entirely wrapped up in himself and how he was to get out of the fierce elements.

Bynington and the sage of mortgages shook hands as cordially as two gentlemen should, after a long separation. They always had been good friends anyway. The former noticed that the grave person of wealth had materially aged since he saw him last. He was not inclined to be pleasant, but said he would rather lose twelve per cent of his entire wealth than be caught in this infernal snowstorm. And he muttered "twelve per-cent—twelve per-cent"—to himself, as he looked out the window where an eddying blast had blown away the snow and left a visible opening over the white face of nature.

Bynington turned his attention to the beautiful Nina, who looked as radiant and lovely as ever, though a little more filled out and matronly.

He explained in a few hurried words how he

came up there on the snowplow and was about to return.

"And are we going through Mr. Bynington?" she inquired anxiously. For a real dread had already settled down on the passengers, as to the outcome of their fates.

"I am sorry to tell you Mrs. Aregave that there is great danger regarding this train getting out of here for some time, but you had better accompany us. I can make arrangements with the railroad people for you and your husband to come down on the plow to where there is a hotel and good accommodations," said he, "and I know it is the best thing you can do, as this train may not get out of here for a week."

"What do you think of the proposition?" she said, drawing her husband's attention to the matter.

"Oh, going down on a snowplow, when I've paid my fare for a Pullman!—What for?" he demanded angrily.

"Well, your Pullman and fare may both be here till spring," retorted Mr. Bynington. "This train cannot be moved until they get men here to shovel it out."

"And why do they not get the men?" asked Mr. Aregave.

"Because there are no men or shovels within a hundred miles of us," he responded, "and if it

snows all day and to-night this train will be buried so far out of sight that a coyote will not be able to see an object to bark at in the morning. But if you would condescend to take passage with us on the rotary, a run of fifteen or twenty miles will put us down in the sheltered canyon, where there is as cozy a little hotel as one would wish to stop at in stormy weather like this."

"O, let us go, by all means, Mr. Aregave!" cried his wife, anxious for the excitement and the trip.

"Not I," answered the capitalist, gravely. "Haven't I paid my money to the railroad?—my money!—then want me to ride on an engine—I'll see them damned first. This is what I get by paying extra fare and coming around by the northern route!" and he rubbed his hands and growled about paying out extra money.

"O, then we will stay, if we perish!" sighed the fair lady, as she settled down in her seat.

"We are going on the plow!" announced a passenger known as Mr. Snowdown, who was traveling with his wife and wife's sister. "Come along Mrs. Aregave, it will be fun. You had better come too Col.," nodding to the aged capitalist.

"Me go? That's what the railroad company would like," replied Mr. Aregave, angrily. "Pay out my good, hard money for railroad fare and then ride in a barn. If I had known the cars

couldn't haul me I'd saved my fare and walked. Bad sest to 'em!"

"Well, my wife and wife's sister and I are going," said the Snowdown man, "and if you won't come you had better let your wife accompany the ladies."

"She can go, if she wants too," he replied, more benignantly, "but for myself they will either carry me on this train or refund my money."

"I will remain here too, of course," said his wife, looking very forlorn. "If we perish in the storm I suppose it is no great matter anyway."

"No, you go along with the other women. I've paid your fare to San Francisco, and it won't cost no more. There's a hotel under the hill and the price isn't high—I know the place well. Wrap yourself in furs and be gone."

"I would rather not go without you," answered his wife.

"Yes, you will. You would be fidgeting all night if you stayed, now you have the notion of it."

So after some explanations from Bynington and the local manager of the railroad, and the assurance of Mr. Snowdown, his wife and wife's sister, that they would take especial care of Mrs. Aregave and see that no harm befell her, that lady consented to hazard the trip without her husband being one of the party. The old capitalist would stay by the train and get the worth of his money

and the wife would journey through the storm under the protection of Bynington, Mr. Snow-down, his wife and wife's sister. It was only a few hours separation, a trifling incident, but this incident rought a great change in all their lives.

I do not approve of a married lady going anywhere with a man without her husband being one of the party, even if there were other females along, because it might lead to trouble, or all sorts of complications, but Mr. Aregave did not think so, and Ben Bynington and the rest of the party did not care.

For the ride in the wabby snowplow Mr. Aregave made his wife wrap herself in furs until she resembled a big haystack. He had been investing some of his "twelve per cent" in costly furs during the trip and kept them by him in the coach. When he had put around her all that she could possibly stand up under he made Bynington take a great bearskin coat of his that had been made in Dakota, to stand between the wearer and a blizzard, and which he had thoughtfully purchased on his way West. This thoughtfulness on the part of Mr. Aregave come in very handy later in the day—but of this we will not speak now.

So, when she was all muffled up and ready to be removed from the comfortable coach of Marquis de Pullman into the snow-eating pine box of the Southern Pacific Co., she felt a great misgiving,

and declared she would not go unless her husband was by her side.

The tremendousness of the undertaking seemed to have come over her all at once; and what appeared to be a mere trifling matter a moment ago now stood out in her vision as being the most momentous occurrence of her life. She turned to her husband and really begged him to let her stay where she was; but the gods seemed to have driven him mad for his own destruction.

He turned and pushed her forcibly along to the snowplow. Handed her from his protection into the hands—yea, into the arms—of Bynington!

The whistle screamed toot! toot!!

The huge machinery began to move!

The drive wheels danced around on the track; and the great old box of machinery, with its whirling head of plated steel went plunging through the drifts of snow headed for the Sacramento canyon.

Bynington stood beside the woman whom the husband had intrusted to his care, and looked very serious. Perhaps debating whether he should or should not have been instrumental in inducing her to make this trip. It was evident that the Snow-downs intended to leave her in his hands, and he did not know the woman or know himself. He had gone up the road to see a snowplow in action, and here he was returning with the wo-

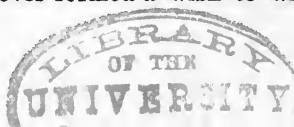
man—of all women in the world—who had been in his thoughts for nearly a year, and who he imagined had been his companion for countless ages.

Thus Bynington stood reviewing the case in his mind, the madam meanwhile watching the car glide through the drifts.

Those present who recall the scene, say that the marks of genius were traceable in every line of his face, as the thoughts of the mind played over his countenance. His varying expression would remind one of the cold, austere, immovable summit of Mount Shasta; the mighty, crashing, tumbling of an avalanche; the mad, dashing, plunging of a cataract; the broad, whirling, rolling depth of the ocean; the gentle rippling of a mountain stream; the rustling of the green grass and blooming flowers; the sweet, surprised smile on the face of the babe, when its eyes first meet the rising sun; the calm, joyful look of lovers by the fireside; and the solemn dropping of earth upon the coffin lid.

His face seemed to express all these wonderful changes. The rapid movement of the car was a glacier (which moves a mile a century) compared with the thoughts of this man, traveling down the mountain with the woman he had been dreaming about every night for the past six months, and whom he had accidentally picked up in a snow-storm.

He had never formed a wish to win her affec-



tions from her husband, as much as he admired her, though he had spontaneously allowed his feelings to master him in the past. And he certainly never dreamed of accompanying her on such a peculiar ride as this, where she was partly in his keeping, till such time as she could be restored to her legal spouse; but fate and chance had put her in his way when he least expected it, and we must wait and see how it will end.

She was now beginning to enjoy the trip immensely. The novelty and excitement just suited her fancy, and whatever foreboding weighed at her heart when she started had now all drifted away.

Bynington was trying to resolve in his mind whether this trip, which seemed at first to be a trivial incident, was really a passing trifle in his existence or something momentous.

Anyway, it was this trip, the accidental meeting of these two people, who had so passionately loved each other in the fragrant summer less than a year ago, that caused this story to be written.

The world may blame the author for giving the history of these children of Nature to the public, but why should the public not know the lives of two such interesting people (though they took every precaution themselves to draw a curtain between them and the light of publicity) who

loved beneath the fragrance of the summer flowers, and in the blasts of the winter snow?

Nina was becoming more light-hearted and jovial as the train dashed through the snow and made a wider gap between her and her husband. There was probably a reason for this, of which her companions never dreamed. I stated a while back that she looked a little more "matronly" than she did the previous summer, but, as it turned out afterwards, and as we hinted in the early chapters of this work, she was just simply a young maiden. Mr. Aregave had passed his life accumulating money, at which vocation he had many talents, but he was woefully lacking in domestic relations, and it would have been better for him had he not married—better for them both. She was young and vivacious, neither stick nor stone, and probably deep down in her heart was pleased to be out of her wedded lord's society. The world lay before her, and she pined for a knowledge of its mysteries. A woman should be loyal to her lord, but our fair heroine had been suffering from too much loyalty (to use a modified expression, that will not offend the elderly ladies or the clergy).

I am one of those who always write chaste literature and would not give offense to anybody for the world; but in the morally-*iest* kind of writing (such as this work is) I do not believe in fencing around the facts, or hiding an important part of

my subject, such as (what they call) "clean" writers do. I hope I will never be known as a "clean" writer, because that is a word used to shelter dullness.

Here I will bring this chapter to a close and start another, and what may happen before I get through with that, heaven only knows. In the meantime the clergy or the laity, matron or maid can rest assured that it is good for them to read or I would not be writing it.

CHAPTER IV.

After the rotary had dashed along over the frozen rails for a distance of eight or ten miles, it brought up all standing against a pile of rock and dirt, which had slid down on the track. It was what the railroad people call a "slide," and along the mountain side, where this road winds its crooked course, these slides are of frequent occurrence in the wet season and cause the wreck of many a train.

The plow dashed right in it without any warning and the passengers were thrown from their feet, though nobody was injured but the engine, and it being constructed of steel it didn't mind the jar much.

When they picked themselves up they found their old car lying against the snow-bank.

"And here we are," says Bynington.

"Yes! here we are," re-echoed the Superintendent, who went out to investigate the wreck. "We will get down in no canyon to-night," he said re-

turning to the car door, "unless we walk, as traffic is now suspended from both ends on this division of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of Kentucky.

Bynington went out to reconnoiter, and assisted his female companion out of the wreck and up on the snow-bank, (which had been piled up by the rotary on each side of the track to a height of ten feet) and where they could take in the situation and view the surrounding country. Mr. Snowdown also assisted out his wife and wife's sister, and they discussed the next best plan of action.

"While it is about ten miles around by the railroad to this hotel in the canyon, I spoke of," explained Mr. Bynington, "it is only a mile or two down through the woods from where we stand, and by the hardness of the crust I believe it would bear us quite easily. Suppose we cut across through the timber and down the mountain side?"

"I am willing, if you think it safe," said Nina, looking at him confidentially.

"When we get to where the hill is steep I will haul you on the gentleman's fur coat," he said, producing the garment presented by her lord.

"That will be great sport," she answered smiling in a way that showed she had entire trust in her escort.

"I presume we can all go that way," said Mr. Snowdown.

"Why, certainly," said Mr. Bynington. "We will have to keep together. The Superintendent might come also to help assist the ladies over the drifts.

"That I will," said that functionary of the big railroad system.

So they started down the mountain side on a trip that would have struck awe in the heart of a mountaineer mail-carrier under such circumstances, but our friends considered it a lark.

Bynington gathered up all the madam's superfluous furs and wraps, and the two of them were the last to take leave of the train crew.

The crust of snow was frozen hard enough to sustain a person's weight, so the wayfarers made good time down the hill till they reached the thick timber, there the snow was quite soft and they would sink two or three feet at every step. In fact they soon found locomotion impeded and nearly blocked altogether.

The Superintendent took the lead and lent his assistance to Mr. Snowdown's wife's sister, and in regular rotation, like a flock of sheep, came Mr. Snowdown, his wife, Mr. Bynington and his friend's wife. When the traveling became laborious the latter gentleman spread his friend's big coat on the snow and sat his fair companion

on the same, thinking he could thereby transport her down the hill, but he might as well try to drag the five or six feet of snow, as the mushy nature of that element prevented any sleighing. And to make matters worse it was nearly night and a new storm had set in. The dark, lowering clouds which hung athwart the horizon all day had broken loose, and it was falling as it only knows how in that region—at the rate of an inch a minute, or faster. It came down so thick that it was blinding to look at it. One's garments would be weighted down with the wet mass quicker than he could shake it off. It was falling so thick among the trees that it brought great branches down with it, and the trees held up their battered stumps like an army in distress.

If anything would tend to confuse a traveler it is a storm like this. No where in the world does it snow like in the Sierra Nevadas, and in no part of the Sierra Nevadas can it come down in such chunks as up near Mount Shasta, where these travelers were now "stalled:" and this storm happened to be the most severe ever known to the white settlers of that region. To sum it up, it was something dreadful, and that does not half express it.

The weather was not very cold (as one thinks of that word in the far north) because it is not a frosty climate, but a snowy one—Jupiter!

It was a strong heart, indeed, that could face such a storm, and having no place to take shelter, but in the dreary woods, where the trees seemed to be in need of protection themselves. Our travelers were beginning to feel somewhat alarmed. The greatest difficulty they found was to keep together. The snow came down so fast that one's tracks would be immediately obliterated, and the darkness was becoming so dense that one could not see his neighbor three feet away. In a snow of this kind a person could not look at any object, because of injury to the eyes.

Mrs. Aregave was becoming alarmed, and would throw away her wraps and plunge recklessly in the snow, like one bewildered. Bynington had waited for her, but they had lost sight of the rest of the party. The other women seemed to be able to travel in the snow alright. Mr. Snowdown's sister-in-law displayed as much fortitude as any of her male companions and breasted the storm like a wild goose.

But Nina would not undertake to walk through it, so she and Bynington wasted valuable time struggling around in the snow without making any headway. He could not carry her, and about all he could do was to urge her follow in his footsteps. H understood the country and knew he could take care of her, even if they were out in

the elements all night. At least he would make a desperate effort at trying, as he was a wonderfully strong character under difficulties and when in the presence of danger. He now collected all his wits. He had become lost from the others, but the idea of him losing his head at such a time was out of the question. He almost felt strong enough to match his will against the Fates. The greater the danger the stronger would he brace his nerves, and the more rapidly think.

Besides he had more than his own welfare to look after now. Another man's wife had been turned over to his care, and he had led her into all this danger.

He tried to beat a path for her to walk in, but it was tedious work. The snow-covered trees and mountains had become wrapped in the densest darkness, and the storm was raging upon them in its wildest fury. It was a time when the bravest individual might well begin to quake. If the other women had kept up the gait they were making when he last saw them they were out of the storm by this time.

Mrs. Aregave throughout this ordeal had uttered no complaint, but she had allowed herself to become dismayed by the storm and was now entirely exhausted. In fact she had reached the end of endurance. She discarded all her superfluous clothing and plunged into the snow any-

where. He picked her up in his arms and she lay like a child.

To carry her was out of the question, because it only sunk him under the snow, and he did not know what direction to take himself. So he wrapped the garments about her and asked her to remain still while he beat out a path and looked around a little for bearings.

He tramped around among the trees, and finally made out what looked to be a bank of something—a ridge, knoll or big rock—which under a closer examination turned out to be a cabin, or woodman's hut; the roof of which was just above the snow.

He beat around it and dug the snow away until he found a door, which he bursted open and tumbled inside.

He did not wait to examine it, knowing it would do for a shelter, and thinking it would be the only haven of refuge they would find that night, hastened back to find his companion.

He retraced his steps; but when he reached the place where he had left her he found nothing but the bundle of clothing: the millionaire's wife had gone.

Had she found the other travelers?

The thoughts of losing the girl in the river the summer previous come into his mind, and he wondered if this would not be a similar tragedy.

He came near going wild himself at the thoughts of it.

"Do women really slip through my fingers and disappear like a phantom?" he cried to the bleak elements. And indeed that really seemed to be one of his fatalities.

"If she should die in the storm!"

The storm was sweeping down with such fury; the night was so dark and cold; and the blinding snow was dashing against his eyes with such force, that it seemed almost impossible to trace her steps. In fact the snow was falling so fast it would fill up a track before the foot was out of it.

He listened, but could hear no sound, save the storm roaring through the trees, and the branches moaning beneath the weight of snow.

White bodies, sometimes larger than a man, and of all shapes, seemed to be coming down with the storm and floating before his eyes. Some of them would march up to his face, slashing at one-another like an army of soldiers (or demons) in battle; then they would whirl off and go driving before the wind, while a new regiment would come slanting down towards him, and float off after the others.

"Ye imps!" he cried, "have ye stolen my lady from my side and are ye now fighting over her?"

or is she buried in the snow and ye trying to hide her from my sight?

"O, ye creatures of the blast!"

He gathered up the furs she had discarded and started down the mountain in the direction of the least resistance, crying in the anguish of his heart: "Just let me find that woman and save her life and it is the only favor I will ever ask of heaven or earth.

"O Thou who rules the storm!

"Who casts these elements in angry fury down!

"And rises one to batter on the other!

"Guide thou my steps to find my love, and I will bare myself to the icy blast till the very creatures of the storm beat themselves to pieces against my person!

"Yea, I will battle with the elements, and force these fierce clouds back!

"Take me out of the snow and let us die together!" came a voice from under his feet.

And the first thing he knew he tripped against her body, which was buried out of sight, and rolled awkwardly over it; more comical than pathetic, which knocked his poetic sentiments into a cocked hat.

It is bad to spoil a pretty sentiment by falling over it; but we are such clumsy mortal things after all, and it is hard to always act the hero in a snow-storm.

But he did pick her up out of the snow with all the haste possible, and after giving her a very warm hug—(which could be pardoned under such circumstances) guessed the direction of the cabin, and started for it as well as he knew how.

He soon found the place again, thanks to his wonderful faculties for keeping track of directions and distances. In this he had a better instinct, or judgment than a carrier pigeon.

He carried her inside, brushed the snow from her clothing, hugged her to produce warmth, chafed her pretty hands and face, called her all the pet names he could think of, fished some matches from his pocket and struck a light.

If this had been in ye olden times, when knights picked up stray ladies, he would have had the devils own time striking a flint and trying to produce a flicker, but thanks to our era of matches, a gentleman can produce a light any time he wants to.

He saw some dry sticks of wood by a little rock fireplace, which he soon ignited, and had a blaze roaring out the chimney in no time.

He sat his lady down by the fire, and then ran out and hunted up her lost furs, as he was bound to keep their wardrobe intact. It was a cold night and they needed all the clothing they could get.

When he returned he took time to look around the establishment to see what kind of an abode

they had taken possession of. It proved to be quite a cozy affair. In fact he had heard of this very cabin, as it had been occupied the past summer by quite a conspicuous character, and was just in the shape he left it a few months before; even to having a pile of dry wood in the house.

There was the wood stacked up by the chimney; an improvised table holding the place of honor in the center of the room; a couple of nice little rough-wood seats; a comfortable looking bunk, made of poles and boards, and covered with a soft layer of pine needles, which the conspicuous character had gathered at his leisure to make a soft couch to lie on, while he studied the works of the old Mahatmas from the Himalayas.

This conspicuous character, who left this hermitage to furnish a shelter for our two bewildered friends, had used it as a place of retirement, in which to study the mysteries of the thaumaturgic skill revealed by Koot Hoomi and Madame Blavatsky. He was trying to fathom the works of those two great adepts, who could pick up a material object and disintegrate it by some mystic process, pass it through other matter and restore it to its original solidity a thousand miles away. He was studying occult Buddhism, on what he pleased to call "the higher plane," and expected at some day to blossom out a full-fledged Ego (after he had gone through two or three

hundred reincarnations) when the spiritual entity would be broken loose forever from every particle of matter, then he would be ready to flit away to the beautiful and dreamless Nirvana of Buddha.

So he had flitted away and left this cabin closed in all the glory of spirituality and mysticism, till it was opened by our two very material and human friends.

In fact it pains me to think they were so human. I would like to have had them more divine.

It was old Cicero who said "to err is human." He discovered that sublime truth a long time ago. The best people in the world are liable to err; the disagreeable, inhuman, old dried up ones, never. They are too mean to err.

But our two friends, with all their humanity, seemed to have a large share of the spirituality and mysticism of Koot Hoomi, so it might have been the occult power left in the woods by this disciple of the Brotherhood of Adepts in Thibet, that attracted our friends to the retreat.

As the reader will remember, they had been attracted to each other very mysteriously from their first meeting, and she never has shown the least resistance to this man, which the prudish reader may condemn, as being a fault of the writer; but it was an inborn essence of her composition.

Anyway they were fast becoming warm and comfortable. The fire was blazing cheerfully on

the hearth, lighting up the small room in mellow splendor. Bynington laid his furs on the Mahatma's bunk and looked to the welfare of his companion. He helped her remove her overshoes, likewise her shoes and stockings—as the snow had wet through at her ankles.

My dear reader may think it is going too far for a young man to remove the stockings of another man's wife; but, as I hinted above, she was not exactly a wife, and then this was a very strange case. It is seldom you hear of such respectable people getting lost in a snow-storm and bringing up in a cozy hut when they were about to perish. I would not, for the world, set down aught against these people that was not scriptural truth.

They were both glad to be in out of the storm, and nestled up to the fire. The warmth was acting as a stimulant to her nerves, and being young and healthy, she was fast recuperating from the fatigue. He sat down by her side while she toasted the cold, damp extremities before the fire, and he did the same with his. She might have covered up her ankles, but she did not have the will just then. So they toasted their limbs together, and what pretty limbs she had!

Those ankles bare and—not brown!

In the summer time gone by, Ben Bynington had been thinking how pretty they must be; but

now he saw that they would make an artist or a poet go crazy.

Of course those infernal artists and poets are liable to go into hysterics over anything pretty; and I know the pious reader is not attracted that way—but to proceed.

They wondered what had become of their companions.

"If we had known this cabin was here," said she, "we might have all taken shelter for the night."

"I think they have managed to reach the settlement," he replied.

"They were selfish in not waiting for us, anyway."

"They were presumably looking out for themselves."

"It would have been so much better if we could have all kept together."

"Yes. I tried to keep up with them."

After quite a toasting he brought a rug left by the disciple of Buddha, and spread on the hearth beneath her feet.

He seated himself by her side again, poked up the fire, and they chatted as comfortably as two innocent school children; toasting their feet before the fire, sticking their toes in the warm ashes, gazing dreamingly at the crackling embers, and occasionally stealing a glance into each other's eyes.

She had unloosened her hair, and those beautiful dark silken tresses fell lovingly around her graceful neck and shoulders, and strayed over her face, partly hiding the soft, lovable light that was sparkling in her eyes. He could not be blamed if he pressed his bare foot against hers, or clasped the little hand that lay upon her knee, while they listened to the storm raging over the surrounding country.

They were becoming (in spite of their surroundings, and the circumstances of their lives) too affectionately friendly. So he got up and took a new survey of the Brahman's abode.

It seemed to have been built pretty strong, but whether it would stand up under the tremendous weight of snow that was tumbling haphazard on the roof seemed doubtful, and caused great uneasiness in his mind.

The bed, he noticed was a delightful place for a tired person to repose his weary limbs upon. They had sufficient wraps too, to make a decently warm covering. The bunk had been made for one person, though two small people might rest thereon, providing they lay close together. Anyway it was big enough for a woman.

He fastened up the door, replenished the fire and sat down again by his companion, to help her dream over the red coals.

She was certainly the prettiest and most

enticing picture that man ever looked upon, with eyes of love, or otherwise. Sitting now on a coat spread upon the floor, her shapely bare ankles stretched out upon the hearth, like she used to sit in summer, only now the feet being naked were taking on pink dimples from the glowing fire; the skirts a little drawn up; the head thrown back, resting against the seat, and the pure red lips partly opened, revealing two pretty rows of white pearls—she was all red and white, and nature's fairest and most bewitching flower.

He brought one of the furs and placed it under her head, that she might rest in more comfort and dream away the pleasant hours, without a disagreeable thought.

Our hero would not take advantage of another man's wife, who had been intrusted to his care, and still he was not made of that kind of clay that would stand everything. I doubt if either of them were ever noted for their ability to resist temptation. Of course she never had any temptation thrown in her way but once, and then she married, and the outcome of that by this time must be familiar to my readers. With the exception of the little episode last summer on the river bank, and that is pretty nearly forgotten by this time,

But the two children were now sitting here very placidly, dreaming over the red coals; they

were both warm and comfortable, perhaps overcome by that drowsiness, which follows exposure to a storm; and were taking no thought of the morrow.

So he could not resist taking hold of that dear little hand again, and watched the expressions play over those sweet lips and face. He was dreadfully in love. Was he really enchanted, and this some gossamer fairy of the Arabian Nights, that would flit away when he went to touch her? or was this really and truly the woman he loved so dearly, who was seated by his side, and removed from all other human beings? A squeeze of her hand told him it was she, and he was content. He only had one wish, that they could stay there undisturbed forever, and this night would extend away out into eternity.

And she sat there dreaming, as the snow fell on their little house. She seemed to hear the flakes coming down in regular beats, as though sounding a chord of music, and were playing a pretty lullaby of love in her ears. The music it made could be formed into words. First it was the cold dropping of the snow, then it changed into babbling brooks and summer flowers. It was a sweet tune and always connected with love. It ran:

We are flakes of crystal white,
 Chill'd on Shasta's lofty height,
 Near the heavenly stars to-night,
 On our sudden downward flight!
 Mortal! Mortal! made of clay!
 Love us ere we pass away.

We go dancing on the hill;
 Kiss and flood the sparkling rill,
 As it boundeth with a will
 From Creation's own distill.
 Love us! Love us! while you may;
 Ere we softly float away.

We are not congealed at all,
 But the softest petal ball
 Grown in Eden ere the fall:
 Fragrant daisies sweet and small.
 Mortal! Mortal! ere we part
 Give us lodgment in your heart!

We are scented flowers of May
 Blooming by the mossy brae;
 Spreading dust of pollen spray;
 Stealing lovers sighs away.
 We will bide your lips to kiss,
 Red with love's attaining bliss!

Mortal! Mortal! made of clay!
 Soft caresses o'er you play!
 Love in raptures while you may,
 Ere you fade and pass away.
 Meet us at the dawn of day
 On Mt. Zion's top to pray.

She was so filled with the enchanted music that

she had to sing the last stanza partly aloud, and cuddled up against her companion; stretching one arm around him, and turning up those red, rosy lips, which he had longed to kiss so many times.

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The snow came down faster and faster. It was the preeminent storm of the season, indeed. It shook up the sturdy old pine trees of the forest, stripped off their smaller branches and left them swaying to and fro as if in pain; with the snowflakes falling from their slivered stumps like frozen tears, imploring the god of storm to have mercy on their broken limbs. It filled up the canyon and drifted in deep ridges on the mountain. The little cabin, wherein our friends rested oblivious of the fury of the elements on the outside, was buried entirely out of sight; and if the snow did not stop up the chimney and cause them to be asphyxiated, it would mash down the roof and crush them to death. But they rested there like two ground squirrels in their winter nest and heeded it not.

The other wayfarers, whom we left a few pages back, had to stand the full blunt of the storm.

The Superintendent kept the lead, and took the hand of Mr. Snowdown's wife's sister, who was a handsome young woman, and well worth being protected from such a furious tempest. They managed to beat their way down the mountain side and reach the hotel in good season. But Snowdown and his wife had a terrible time of it, and would have perished, only the Superintendent, after leaving his companion in security, gathered up a few hardy mountaineers, who, under his guidance, beat their way up the mountain side, where they found the Snowdowns, and rescued them from a dreary death just in the nick of time. The Snowdowns had an experience they would never forget, and long rued the day they left the train to cross a snowy mountain with Bynington and a railroad Superintendent.

CHAPTER V.

Morning finally broke on a canyon and mountain side covered with a dreary waste of snow. The elements were still black and threatening, but the snow had ceased to fall, as though it had snowed itself out and was looking for new material upon which to exercise. The new fleece which fell during the night must have been at least seven or eight feet deep.

Every inhabitant in the little towns and hamlets were astir gophering themselves out. The railroad company had received an assignment of two or three hundred snow-shovelers from the valley the day before and had all their plows out bucking at the beautiful blockading element. The big rotary had been shoveled out and was whipping the snow right and left, as it bore around the canyon's edge. It would pick up great chunks of the stuff, whirl it around on its nose, and toss it in a steady stream twenty or

thirty feet from the track. All one could see of the plow was a rainbow of snow in the air.

They rotated their way up to the stalled train and shoveled it out.

It was during the shoveling out of the train, near noon next day, that some of the train crew bethought themselves to talk about the lost pair—Bynington and his companion.

"What has become of the two foolhardy individuals who left us last night?" asked the brakeman.

"They have certainly perished," authoritatively declared the Superintendent. "They did not reach the hotel and there is no chance for them to live out of doors in a storm like that of last night."

"There is an old cabin on the hillside some where near their course," spoke up the engineer, "and Bynington is a very shrewd man and more nor likely took shelter there."

"More nor likely they didn't," said the brakey.

"The last I saw of them they were making very poor headway," continued the Superintendent, "and I doubt if they reached any shelter. I cannot understand why they could not travel as well as the rest of us"

"Even if he did find that cabin," said the brakey, "it would be a poor shelter in such a storm."

"I have seen the hut you speak of," said the

Superintendent, "but it is not near the route we took, and the amount of snow which fell last night would crush it to the ground. It has caved in a number of stronger buildings in the same vicinity."

"Yes, the Methodist church went down with a smash-up, worse than two trains trying to pass on the same track," chipped in the brakeman.

"That was kinder bad too," remarked the engineer, "seein' that the bawdyhouse next door never busted a cylinder-head."

"That shows you the conductor in charge of the storm has no religion in his job," said the brakeman, "when he strikes the house of God and spares the house of sin."

"And it also shows the injustice of Fate," said the engineer. "Because it is so much easier for a keeper of a bagnio to raise money in this country than it is for the members of a church."

"Then the congregation should use their edifice for the more remunerative purpose, even if they would run wild on a down grade," answered the brakeman.

"Perhaps the purpose that would be the more suitable to you, though, would not be agreeable to others," followed the other in rapid repartee.

"You seem to know more about the income of the two callings than I do," returned the other. "But if you could make such pick-ups as that fellow Bynington did yesterday you could give

more money to the churches, and then not be running in so often for repairs."

"That was a married lady of high standing," broke in the Superintendent, "and I am very uneasy about her."

"Well, it is liable to make trouble if they ever show up," said the brakeman dryly. "Because after being out this long by themselves they have either gone to rue or ruin. Whether they have gone over the hanging wall or been caved down the bank the collision will be equally disastrous."

"It is too bad indeed," said the Superintendent, ignoring the other's insinuations, "and her husband is on this train. Even if they took shelter in a cabin and the snow did not break it in they would die of suffocation."

"That would save the old man the trouble of getting a divorce," said the brakeman.

"Well, the husband will have to be notified as to the present phase of the case," the Superintendent continued. "You had better tell Finn, the passenger brakeman, to explain the matter to the old gentleman," as Mr. Finn leaned over the steps of one of the coaches.

"Break it to him light Finn," said the other brakeman. "Just tell him that his wife was seen last alive going into the woods with a bold, bad man, and a smashup is expected." As Finn came up and was duly instructed.

But Finn very prudently brought Mr. Aregave to the scene and had them explain matters themselves.

Mr. Aregave looked considerably haggard and excited when he came out, and the Superintendent started in at once to explain to him that there were grave doubts about the destination of his wife, who had left the stalled engine on the grade the night before in the company of Mr. Bynington, Mr. Snowdown and wife and wife's sister and himself, and had not been heard of since. (Though the management of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of Kentucky would do all in their power to locate her and her friend, and restore them to their rightful owners.)

"You don't tell me! you don't tell me!" broke in Mr. Aregave, excitedly ringing his hands. "I would rather have lost twelve per cent, twelve per cent, interest, on a five-thousand-dollar mortgage for a whole year, than to be told of the like—she would go—she would go—twelve per cent, mind you! twelve per cent!"

When Mr. Aregave was excited he always thought of "per cent."

"We will be down there pretty soon with this train," said the Superintendent, "as it is about shoveled out, and we will put all our force to work on their trail."

"O, mercy, hunt her up!" broke in the hus-

band, growing more excited. "I won't have to pay the cost—twelve per cent—twelve per cent!—wife lost! — money gone! — O, this infernal country!—this devil's country!—I have trouble every time I come up here!

"Trouble, trouble, trouble.

"Trouble with the Indians, when I come this way looking for gold in early days—trouble with my wife and young friends when I come up looking for pleasure at a summer resort—and now more trouble! I knew she would be the death of me! Woman, woman, woman!"

"Very likely she's 'loped with t'other man," broke in Finn, the passenger brakeman, who was not very sentimental over love affairs, anyway, and had a healthy dislike for the covetous millionaire.

"Don't you say it!—Don't you say it, you fiend!" shouted the other, shaking his fists furiously. And he commenced chasing Finn around the cars.

The train started up while the millionaire and Finn were still engaged in a foot race. The old gentleman was beside himself with anger, and anxiety about his wife. She was probably the only person in the world he had any regards for, and the insinuating remark of the brakeman was more than he could stand.

He chased him from one car to another after

the train was under headway, to the amusement of other passengers, and finally, after being eluded by Finn, Mr. Aregave concluded to leave the train and go out over the snow-bank in search of his wife.

He jumped off the steps of one of the coaches and ran up the steep slippery bank of snow that had been made by the plow.

* . * * * * *

What has become of our two friends and the disciple of Koot Hoomi's cabin?

I suppose the reader would like to know something about their fate by this time; and I am afraid to go and draw the curtain myself. I know the reader would hate to hear that they had perished; he would also hate to hear that they had done anything wrong—so would I. If it turns out that they are dead beneath seven or eight feet of snow, who will be to blame? Not the present scribe, I hope, because I am only chronicling the great occurrences that took place on that memorable day—memorable, especially to the simple inhabitants who existed in that neck of the woods at the time.

It must have been some time during the latter part of the night that the roof of the small cabin went down with a crash. It had been holding up

a surprising amount of snow for a structure so frail, but a time had come when it could bear the strain no longer. The influence of the Adepts of Thibet seemed to have given it strength up to the time of the crash, when our two mortals found themselves struggling among a mass of broken poles and snow. Whether the mystic Brotherhood withdrew their protection because of some wrongdoing of these, their children, after being conducted to its shelter, or whether the cabin just simply could not stand up under any more weight will never be known.

Anyway the crash was something frightful to the two occupants. The supports gave way without any warning; but they escaped being hit by any of the flying timber, which might have killed them outright.

They commenced a life and death struggle with the elements which were trying to crush and smother them.

In his desperate floundering Bynington discovered that the rock chimney still stood up in the wreck like a monument, so with great effort he tunneled his way over to it. He found that the fire had melted the snow away around it, that the poles were held up by the rocks, and that he had standing and breathing room. He took a few long breaths and then dug in the debris for his companion, whom he drew to his side.

They both breathed an air of relief, and then commenced a struggle up by the chimney till they reached the surface, where they were safe from a dreadful death which threatened them a few moments before; but they were still in a sorry plight.

He went down the chimney again and fished out what portion of their wraps he could find near the opening, brought them up and wrapped them about his shivering companion. Then they started out to breast the storm again.

It would be long to tell of their struggle through seven or eight feet of new snow, besides the old fall, but they both showed more courage and fortitude than they did the night before, and, as the storm had somewhat abated, finally wallowed down in the canyon.

It was near the break of day when these two exhausted children found themselves on top of a little house. They did not know it was a house till they were on the roof.

As they scrambled over it they could hear some one talking within. It was the voice of a man, and he was sending a string of oaths up through the roof, which made Bynington at once guess at his profession.

"Rachel, them's the damn'dest snowflakes I evr hard, that's fallin' on thur rufe," said the voice. "Its nothin' but shivel snow, shivel snow; if one was unner a sawlog in hell he'd havter still shivel snow, by ———. I jist cleen'd the rufe

offner an' now its comin' down agin, like hell. Godamn sich a storm."

"Lor, Jasp, them's not snowflakes," came a female voice. "Yer kint hier snow fallin."

Our two friends slid down into a tunnel, which Jasp had bored out from his door, and asked for shelter. They met the man coming out to shovel snow, as he thought the sounds they made on the roof were caused by a new storm. He was clad in a pair of overalls and a red flannel undershirt, and had no time to devote to stragglers at that unseemly hour. Bynington knew he was correct in his surmises of the man's calling, for the red shirt at once denoted the make-up of a bullwhacker. (He wore the characteristic garb of all bullwhackers, especially in bad weather. In summer time he might have on two or three coats. Red shirts were worn in the days of Bret Harte in California, but now no one but bullwhackers wear them.)

Bynington was bound to have shelter, if he had to fight for it, so he paid no attention to the oaths fired at him by the bullwhacker, but assisted Nina in the house, where they found the bullwhacker's wife, Rachel, to be a very clever person. Their teeth were chattering together at a dreadful rate, and Nina was nearly dead; but Rachel warmed and fed them, and then sent Nina to her (Rachel's) bed, while she dried her clothing before a rousing pine-wood fire.

She heated flannels and wrapped about the poor thing's knees and chest, and dosed her with hot tea till she fell asleep. Poor girl, she must have been about dead.

About noon that day the bullwhacker might have been seen wending his way towards the station with a yoke of his speediest "critters" hitched to a wood sleigh, and Bynington and Nina riding in state. The lovely woman in this rude turnout looked as attractive as Cleopatra sailing up the river Cydnus, in her gilded barge, to meet, and capture the heart of Antony at Cilicia.

The sun was now shining brightly and her face was as radiant as the sunbeams dancing on the sparkling snow. These two children, Bynington and Nina, loved the sunshine as man and woman never loved it before. They were cradled beneath a southern sun—especially the woman—and those so reared are never satisfied to live in the shade. So in the warm light of day, after coming out of so many scrapes, they were both cheerful and happy.

After the bullwhacker had Goddamned the hearts and eyes of his two beeves for some distance, and to very little avail, as far as making time went, they turned a sharp curve in the road, and there—yes, there, sure enough—was the hotel for which they sought the night before; and there was a train coming down the canyon that looked for the world like the one on which the lady was traveling across the continent. It was the south-bound Oregon Express.

They bade adieu to the bullwhacker and resumed the journey on foot.



CHAPTER VI.

When Nina looked down the long sweep of river and snow-clad wooded hills, and saw the train whirling around the curves with its familiar aspect, a thousand memories rushed into her head. The color left her cheek.

"Only a day!" she muttered.

Her companion discerned the troubled look on her face. "If we had known how near we were to civilization last night," he said, "we might have reached here in place of the cabin."

"If we had then, or never," she replied, with firmly set lips.

He could not tell whether she despaired because they did not find the hotel the night before, or because they met the train now.

"Don't you think it was some kind of an occult influence which led us to that little refuge, when we might just as well have reached this place?" he said.

"There may have been some invisible power at

work behind it all," she answered. "The cabin and the oxman's house were both out of our road."

"There is certainly something mysterious about that little hamlet in the pines, and whatever becomes of us in the future the memory of it will be with us still."

"And what a memory! What was I born for?" and she hid her face in her handkerchief, and sobbed.

He was beginning to feel a little blue himself, and to think that the part he had played would not redound to his glory, though he had done the best he could. He was in a predicament where heroes very seldom appear.

"Do not grieve, little one," he said. "You are now safe from your trip, and going back to the world, where you can share in all its brilliancy and shine. You will part from me and I will go out in the night alone. If only some of those tears were because of that departure I could the better return into the darkness and solitude."

"Don't talk to me that way!" she sobbed. "My heart is already broken. You think I have no feelings—I am not going any further!"

"Pardon me! I did not intend to hurt your feelings at such a time. We will have to go on. Your reputation depends on it. Go down and explain matters, and we will await future events. Whatever feelings sway our breasts we will have

to bury there, for the present. Will you agree?"

"I would rather not explain anything, whatever comes of it," she said.

"Well, will you agree to love me, whatever comes of it?"

"Ye—yes—I will!" she whispered.

"Without equivocation?"

"Yes—God forgive me, and forgive us both."

"Amen!"

"We are now able to face anything."

"I feel a presentiment in my heart that all is well," he said, after a short pause. "I am generally informed in some mysterious way in advance if anything serious is about to happen to me or mine, and by conjuring up all the presentiment fibers within me I cannot feel one suspicious twitch."

So they resumed their journey towards the little station and the waiting train.

They floundered around in the snow and finally reached the railroad track.

They were both a little giddy and dizzy, for as much as they tried to brace their nerves they were going through a dreadful ordeal. Of course they could explain where they spent their time by the bullwhacker and wife—at least part of it—and that would do for an explanation, but these were two children of deep sentiment and did not care to explain anything.

They brought up at the rear end of the Pullman after a while, and ascended the steps, where he immediately assisted her to her drawing-room.

* * * * *

There are some awkward situations in this world and the reader has good cause for supposing that he, or she, is facing one right now. That is why I thought it best to make a little pause here and give the dear reader a chance to collect his wits, and to ponder, if possible, over the misadventures of this world.

Bynington had returned the lady to her husband, but—well, the writer does not intend to moralize over it, but will introduce the reader directly to the scene.

When the lady passengers saw Mrs. Aregave return they went wild over her.

There were Mr. Snowdown's wife and sister, who had just come aboard themselves, and they were terribly surprised. They had given her up for dead long ago.

"Oh, the dear girl!—the dear girl!"

"She has returned!"

"She has returned!"

"She has returned!" cried every lady passenger together.

"We never expected to see you alive again."

"It was reported that you perished in a snow-bank last night."

"A house fell down and crushed you to death."

"Or was it a tree?"

"Where have you been?"

"What's the matter?"

"That beautiful color has left your cheek."

"I declare it has!" as they crowded around her and all talked at once.

"The poor thing looks faint."

"And see, her skirts are all bedraggled with the snow."

"But she does not look like one out in a storm all night."

"I believe her feet are wet."

"Take off her shoes and—turn the men out!"

Bynington went to the buffet and ordered the porter take a cup of coffee immediately to Mrs. Aregave.

When he returned to the drawing-room he was feeling pretty uneasy, for several reasons; and he saw that Mrs. Aregave was casting an eye around as though she expected somebody. They were both in just a little nervous condition. One of the lady passengers perceiving that she looked for her husband, explained that he left the train to search for her and had not yet returned.

"Why, don't you people know," shouted Finn, the passenger brakeman, coming through the car, "the old fool jumped off the steps when the car

was in motion, and attempted to run up the steep bank of snow (as several bullheaded jays have done before). When he got near the top of the bank, which was about ten feet high (piled up by the rotary) he slipped back, and came rolling down under the wheels—about four sets of trucks passed over his body—and the coroners of two counties are now trying to gather up pieces enough to hold an inquest on.”

The women all screamed, and threw up their hands in horror.

But there was no outcry from the newly-made widow.

She had fainted.

* * * * *

Bynington standing on the platform of the little depot saw his old friend Viebrasit getting aboard the train in the custody of the Sheriff. He had been arrested for misappropriating public funds, and was being taken away for trial. All the honor and uprightness, which hedged about so good a man, was gone; the idols were broken; and the whole community looked down upon him as being a bad egg. Even those he had befriended shunned him, and they were many. The railroader, miner, farmer, sawmiller, bullwhacker, woodchopper, snowshoveler, teamster, barber, baker, butcher

and the butcher's boy, all held themselves aloft and stood on their dignity, for fear he might touch their uncontaminated persons. The Chinaman and negro remained in the background and looked wise. The latter probably would have liked to give him some information about the prison wherein he had been incarcerated, but refrained from indulging in any remarks.

Bynington looked upon the virtuous community, frowned, and boarded the train without bidding anyone adieu.

While brakeman Finn sung out "All aboard!"
There was a change with the seasons, indeed.

* * * * * * *

If you look for this town in the Sacramento canyon now you will be disappointed. The hotel caught fire that same spring and burned to the ground, and the inhabitants have all moved to other parts. The town is a thing of the past, but the cabin wherein the Theosophist dreamed and the lovers sheltered is still pointed out to tourists as it stands partly dismantled among the pines.

CHAPTER VII.

A few years after the occurrences chronicled in the foregoing chapters the writer found himself out on the great South-Western prairie, some miles from any railroad (I will not say where.)

I was riding along on horseback one fine sunshiny afternoon over an unbroken plain, dotted with cactus, yucca, mesquite and mescal, and the solemn night-blooming cereus were standing up like mileposts, pointing their thorny arms into the unknown stretch beyond.

It was in the early months of spring, when the verdure was in bloom, the wild grass was interspersed with delicately shaded flowers, and the usual somber gray of this lonely desert waste had taken on the pleasant hues of a Persian rug. The scene was animated by a band of cattle grazing in the distance, and a covey of quail cooing softly in a mesquite bush near by. A lazy lizard was basking in the sun on a leaning chaparral and throwing up his jaw to catch an occasional-passing fly; while a lanky coyote eyed me suspiciously as I jogged by. The light, dry air was invigorating, and one was filled with a sense of contentment and peace.

My way led across a *cuesta*, or rolling hill, where I brought up by a prosperous looking cattle rancher's home; nestled beside a cool spring, which was bubbling up from the center of the earth near by, making a genuine oasis in the desert.

The rancho was a long, low adobe house (*casa*), partly hidden by vines and flowers, which were creeping around the walls and doors; and, like all similar structures, had an open court through the center where the warm breezes could circulate among the thick foliage and cool off.

I alighted, threw the reins over a post and saluted an aged looking Mexican dame, who seemed to be mistress of the ranch, and from whom I requested a drink of water.

She returned my greeting with—"Buenos dias, caballero!"—and then, like all Mexican women of the frontier, started in with—"Habla V. Español, señor?"

"Muy poco, señora; pero lo entiendo bastante."

"Que se ofrece, caballero!"

"Deme roso agua, señora."

"Si señor."

After drinking the old dame's health in water, she said—"Querria V. mejor tomar leche?"

"Si, señora."

While I was sampling her milk she again vanished in la casa and returned with a decanter of wine and glasses, which she sat before me, and—"Quiere V. tomar un vaso de vino?"

"Si señora. Bebo a la salud de V!"

"Como encuentra V. el vino, señor?"

"Esta excelente, delicioso. Le doy a V. muchas gracias, señora."

The vintage was of the very best, and I felt greatly refreshed after partaking of her hospitality. The reader must remember that drinking, most anything, is the principal luxury one indulges in on the desert.

While the old crone had been generously supplying me with refreshments I noticed that the house was rather luxuriously furnished; fine works of art hung on the walls; large stacks of books were thrown around in odd places, and the whole establishment had an air of comfort and refinement.

I was attracted by a beautiful little girl playing on some costly furs in the hallway, whose countenance seemed to be familiar, though I knew I had never seen her before.

"Who lives here?" I asked the señora, anxious to know the name of the happy tenant of such an oasis in the desert, and also curious about the child.

"Señor Bynington," she replied, "and there he is with señora riding out by that band of cattle."

"Ben Bynington?" I gasped.

"Si, señor."

"Is that his wife with him, and who did he marry?" I asked, with growing anxiety.

"Nina!—she first married antiguo hombre Are-gave."

"Are-gave was very wealthy, was he not?" I asked.

"Mucho, mucho!—He died, and Nina gave all the antiguo humbra's money to his poor relatives; only kept her own, señor, and this ranch she inherited from her father. All the same as un infante. When she returned with el señor Bynington, she was for a long time sad and heart-broken, and the happy smile did not return. I cannot see why she should be so, though, because any muger ought to be glad to exchange an old hombre for a young one. But she seemed to do more silent grieving than if she had killed him. I never liked him, señor. No I. Bynington, kind and good—"

"So they live here?" said I, interrupting the dame.

"Si, señor—they pass the time running cattle, and he writes."

"Whose child is this?" I asked, referring to the pretty little girl with its father's and mother's face, blended into one.

"O, this is little Nina!—their's, señor—la hija—she is a sweet little child and was born here, on the ranch, like her mother before her. I have nursed them both.—Ellos aman—amen ellos."

I am not giving to kissing other people's children; but the temptation was so strong, and my heart was so full, that I had to take this dear little girl in my arms and kiss her sweet face—for her own sake and for the sake of her mother.

After saying—"A mas ver, señora"—to the old dame, and receiving a hearty—"A Dios, señor"—in return, I departed in silence, and had many sad and contradictory thoughts as I took my way across the grassy stretch of cactus, mescal and far-pointing cereus. My heart was full, and I do not know why my eyes filled with moisture.

Buried from the world on the desert; they have gone back to primitive life, and are following first principles. It is just as well.

* * * * *

While waiting for the train I picked up a San Francisco paper and read the headlines of "A Great Sensation—Mrs. Cloyd Landers has Sued Her Husband for a Divorce—Mr. Landers is again at the Keeley Cure."

THE END.



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